STORIES OF IMAGINATION

FANTASTIC

APRIL
50¢

CENTIPEDES OF SPACE

By Daniel F. Galouye

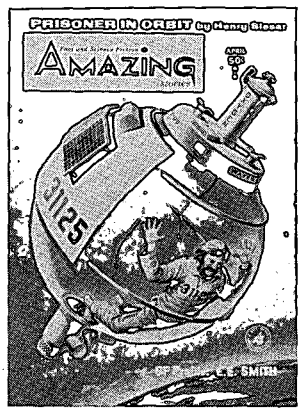
THE DUNSTABLE HORROR

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In April AMAZING

SCREAMS FOR HELP ARE USELESS . . .

YOU ARE ALONE



You are a prisoner of war in an isolated lunar base. Your captor is an automaton, doing only what he is programmed to do and think. Suddenly, the war is over, but not for your captors. They have decided to put you into a "total security" cell—the ultimate in isolation—a one-man space bubble. And you are alone—the only one in the whole universe—a PRISONER IN ORBIT. Read this spine-tingling novel by Henry Slesar.

Also:

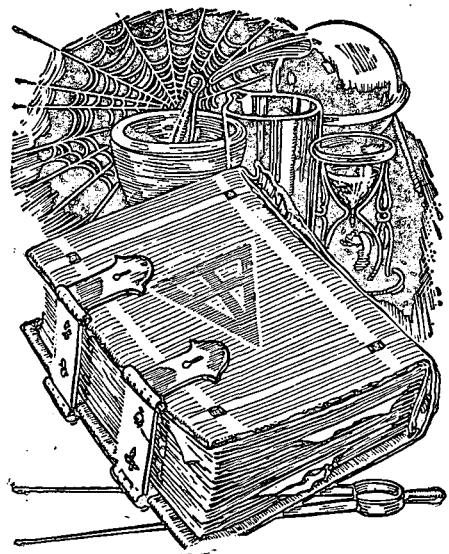
This issue's SF PROFILE is on one of the early, great sf writers, E.E. Smith, creator of the **Skylark** and the **Grey Lensman** series.

Don't miss the astonishing April AMAZING

Now on sale—only 50¢

FANTASTIC, Stories of Imagination, Vol. 13, No. 4, April 1964, is published monthly by Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, at 434 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60605. (Ziff-Davis also publishes—Popular Photography, Popular Electronics, Electronics World, HiFi/Stereo Review, Popular Boating, Car and Driver, Flying, Modern Bride and Amazing Stories.) Subscription rates: One year United States and possessions $4.00; Canada and Pan American Union Countries $4.50; all other foreign Countries $5.00. Second class postage paid at Chicago, Illinois and at additional mailing offices.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Secrets entrusted to a few

The Unpublished Facts of Life

THERE are some things that cannot be generally told—*things you ought to know.* Great truths are dangerous to some—but factors for *personal power* and *accomplishment* in the hands of those who understand them. Behind the tales of the miracles and mysteries of the ancients, lie centuries of their secret probing into nature's laws—their amazing discoveries of *the hidden processes of man's mind,* and *the mastery of life's problems.* Once shrouded in mystery to avoid their destruction by mass fear and ignorance, these facts remain a useful heritage for the thousands of men and women who privately use them in their homes today.

THIS FREE BOOK

The Rosicrucians (not a religious organization) an age-old brotherhood of learning, have preserved this secret wisdom in their archives for centuries. *They now invite you to share the practical helpfulness of their teachings.* Write today for a free copy of the book, "The Mastery of Life." Within its pages may lie a new life of opportunity for you. Address: Scribe Z.T.W.

SEND THIS COUPON

Scribe Z.T.W.
The ROSICRUCIANS (AMORC)
San Jose, California

Please send me the *free* book, *The Mastery of Life,* which explains how I may learn to use my faculties and powers of mind.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____

The Rosicrucians (AMORC) SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

STORIES OF IMAGINATION
FANTASTIC

APRIL 1964
Volume 13 Number 4

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY

William B. Ziff, Chairman of the Board (1946-1953)

William Ziff, President

W. Bradford Briggs, Executive Vice President

Hershel B. Sarbin, Vice President and General Manager

M. T. Birmingham, Jr., Vice President and Treasurer

Robert P. Breeding, Circulation Director

Stanley R. Greenfield, Vice President

Phillip T. Heffernan, Vice President

Editorial Director
NORMAN M. LOBSENZ

Editor
CELE GOLDSMITH

Ziff-Davis Publishing Company
Editorial and Executive Offices
One Park Avenue
New York, New York 10016
212 ORegon 9-7200
Advertising Manager,
Harold Cymes

Midwestern and Circulation Office
434 South Wabash Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60605
312 WAbash 2-4911

Western Office
9025 Wilshire Boulevard
Beverly Hills, California 90211
213 CRestview 4-0265

NOVELETS

CENTIPEDES OF SPACE
By Daniel F. Galouye 6

THE DUNSTABLE HORROR
By Arthur Pendragon 50

THE DEVIL CAME TO OUR VALLEY
(Fantasy Classic)
By Fulton T. Grant 90

SHORT STORIES

A RITUAL FOR SOULS
By Albert Teichner 72

THE RULE OF NAMES
By Ursula K. LeGuin 79

FEATURES

EDITORIAL 5

COMING NEXT MONTH 49

Cover: Frank Bruno

Illustrating *Centipedes of Space*

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE: All subscription correspondence should be addressed to FANTASTIC, Circulation Department, 434 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. Please allow at least six weeks for change of address. Include your old address, as well as new—enclosing if possible an address label from a recent issue.

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS must be accompanied by return postage and will be handled with reasonable care; however publisher assumes no responsibility for return or safety of art work, photographs or manuscripts.

ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING COMPANY

Copyright © 1964 by Ziff-Davis Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDITORIAL

AS of this writing, we've just received the annual Forecast for 1964 from the venerable Hugo Gernsback, whose fertile imagination manages to stay ahead even of on-rushing scientific progress. Since almost everything the founder of *Amazing Stories Magazine* has prophesied has either come true or been validated as a logical development of known scientific data, we warn you to take these excerpts from Mr. Gernsback's Forecast cautiously; not with a pinch of salt, but with the knowledge that, by golly, they probably will happen ere long!

By 1972, Gernsback predicts, the science of chemo-genetics will be able to whiten the skin of anyone who wants to have white skin. Melanin, the hormone-like substance that pigments skin, has been known since 1925. "By 1976, two scientists isolated the *Melanin-carrier* genes of the Negro.

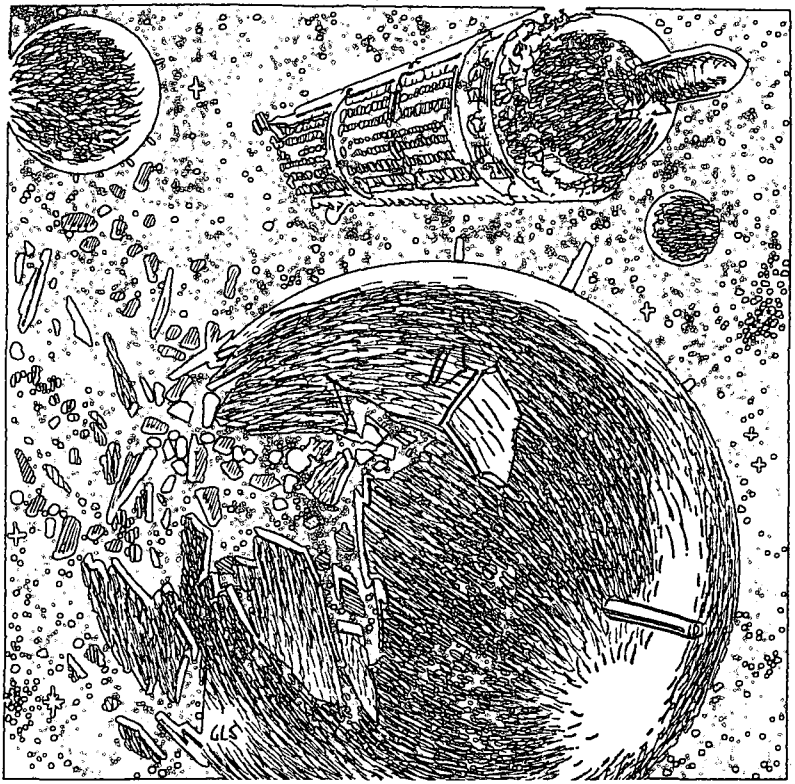
Next they discovered the enzyme *Menalbin*, which causes albinism, really the absence of color pigmentation. By altering the genes which manufacture this enzyme in the body at birth, chemigenetists were able to control the amount of melanin produced in the body and change skin color.

By 2096, Gernsback envisions a wholly computerized population, with each of us managing to cope with a complex civilization solely by means of our ultra-miniaturized personal electronic computers. "The old-type programming was superseded by a system of interlocking buttons on the face of the computer. Pressing them gives almost instant answers to almost any complex business question. The key lies in a super micro-electronic memory which has over 100 billion separate molecular atomic cells . . ."

And by 2124, Mr. G. would have us believe, the taking of the proper hormone (XA for a boy, XB for a girl) by the father 24 hours before conception, will produce automatically a child of the desired sex. Beyond these marvels, Gernsback's forecast of instant electronic newspapers, a laser-powered space drive, and electronic world-wide weather control are virtually pedestrian.

Only question remaining: What will HG Forecast for 1965?—NL

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



CENTIPEDES of SPACE

By DANIEL F. GALOUYE

Illustrator SCHELLING

Vortex Nebula loomed dead ahead—a cosmic deathtrap. But the only way to save the Worlds of the Federation was to take 2000 ships and one million men right through its foreboding swirls of gas. Here is headlong action, suspense, excitement in the great tradition of science fiction.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LESS than a day out of Vortex Nebula, the EFS *Antares*, flagship of the Fourteenth Earth Federation Fleet, added four propulsionmen to its psydrive circuit and notched its velocity up to a maximum ten light years per hour.

Throbbing to the cadenced purring of its twin null-inertia field generators, the superdreadnought plowed defiantly ahead. It was an infinitesimal sliver aimed valiantly at the whirlpool pattern of nebular wisps and bloated, hydrogen-gorging suns. At intervals of two astronomical units, the armada's two thousand fighting ships were arrayed in flawless echelon abaft the *Antares'* port quarter.

Fleet Admiral Abner Bainsworth Ferguson, a restless, compact man of abbreviated height, paced in his cabin.

There was a knock at the door and he barked permission for the caller to enter. A second later he found himself confronted by a gaunt, middle-aged man who stood twisting his chief petty officer's cap between apologetic hands.

"Well, Hewitt," Ferguson demanded. "What is it?"

"Mr. Stewart's wearing his halo again, sir."

"What's coming through?"

"Another communication from ComHub. Urgent."

"Transcribe the thing. I'll have a look at it a little later."

The bald expanse of Hewitt's scalp glistened with perspiration. "They want direct replies from the Admiral, sir."

Ferguson chopped off an oath and ran a hand back over sparse, steel-gray hair before jamming his cap down low on his brow. Damn ComHub! If they couldn't help him, why couldn't they just leave him alone instead of trying to make the impossible more difficult?

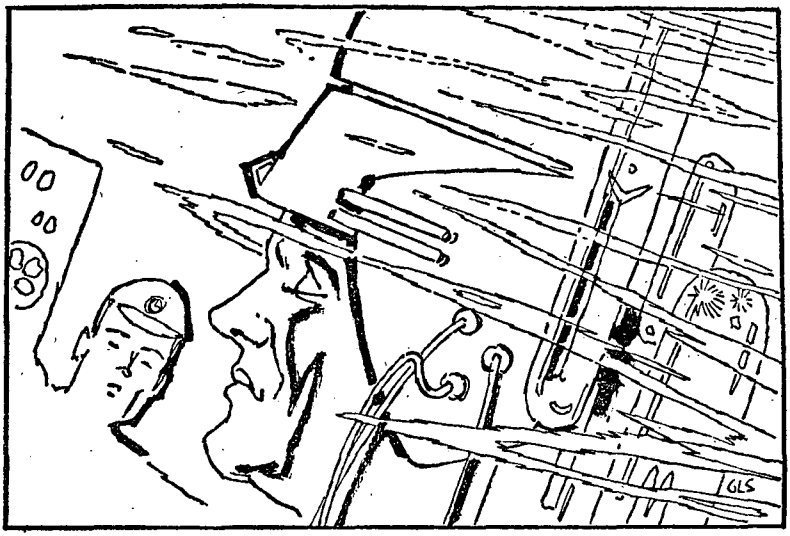
MINIMAL Illumination in the Control Compartment allowed the huge spherical screen surrounding the Bridge to shine out in full luminescence. In so doing, it reproduced with remarkable clarity the total sweep of the galaxy as would be seen outside the *Antares*.

Admiral Ferguson crossed the catwalk leading to the suspended Bridge, clinging firmly to the rail. It was difficult to suppress the illusion that he was not actually out in space. At other times it was as though he were a frightened fetus adrift in the raw womb of the universe.

On his approach, personnel busy at control consoles snapped to attention. But he took his good time acknowledging the gesture of subordination. Instead, he studied the spherical screen.

Ahead, Vortex Nebula was a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



foreboding, intensely brilliant cloud of gaseous swirls and sparkling suns. And Ferguson squinted against its extreme greenish-blue cast. The ship's *c* compensators were apparently only partly correcting the violet spectrum shift as the *Antares'* extravagant speed shortened onrushing wavelengths. The screen's after section was devoid of light. There the celestial image was canceled out as the ship decisively outpaced the lagging light of the stars astern.

Admiral Ferguson shouted a grudging "Carry on!" and the room itself seemed to join in the suspiration of relief. He completed his transit of the Bridge and crossed the after catwalk leaving the Control Compartment.

In Communications, Lieutenant Steward was being closely attended by the psytechnician, Commander Manuel Goddard. And Stewart was, indeed, "wearing his halo."

Strapped to his chair, he was frozen in the trance-inducing grip of the psycom generator. Its convergent rays, playing about his head, had created a pulsating aura that almost concealed and seemed to flow from his closely-cropped, dark hair.

His coarse voice was droning in a mechanical whisper: "ComHub for Admiral Ferguson. ComHub for Admiral Ferguson."

Goddard made a final adjustment in the rectifier circuit and stepped aside. "Ready for transmission, sir," he announced.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Admiral took the chair opposing Stewart and leaned forward. "Ferguson here," he told the Lieutenant. "Go ahead, ComHub."

"I'm afraid you'll have to shout, Admiral," Goddard advised. "Psytransfer may be the answer to a communications officer's prayer, but at trans-*c* velocities of ten-lyph magnitude, volume suppression sets in."

He made an adjustment in the amplification circuit and the nimbus around the Lieutenant's head danced more excitedly.

Stewart's voice strengthened. "ComHub for Admiral Ferguson."

"Ferguson here," the Admiral shouted. "Go ahead, ComHub."

The husky voice became more animate but still lacked volume. "This is Admiral McFadden. Ferguson, you're to turn about immediately!"

"We're going through Vortex Nebula."

"Good God! You *can't* mean that! It's rank insubordination. It's insane! You've two thousand ships, a million men to think of!"

FERGUSON forced himself to remain calm. "We're doing this my way, Jake. The estimate is simple: I got sucked out of my sector by what was presumably a crippled Ramkian fleet. Trying to make a decisive kill, I gave chase, leaving Ulysses Cluster unprotected. And now that I'm on the Ramkian side of Vortex, the enemy launches twin pincers at the Cluster."

"I know, but—"

"By heading back directly through Vortex rather than around it, the Fourteenth Fleet can beat them there by two days. That'll give us enough time to deploy and make Ulysses Cluster impregnable until reinforcements arrive. That's why we're determined to get through the Nebula!"

"You'll do no such idiotic thing, Abner!" The psycom officer's face twisted as though in empathic response to Admiral McFadden's indignation. "Come about and get the hell out of there! Return to ComHub Headquarters instantly!"

"And what about Ulysses Cluster?"

"We'll have to scratch it. Maybe we can recapture it later."

"Scratch it and we'll be outflanked. Within six months you'll have the enemy steaming in full force down the Arm, splitting Federation defenses in half."

McFadden swore through Lieutenant Stewart's captive mouth. "But you're not contributing a damned thing by sacrificing your fleet to Vortex Nebula. Passage has been tried before —many times. We know that the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ramkians lost an entire fleet in there. In three centuries only two mangled ships have managed to get through!"

"Damn it, Jake, you don't *believe* those yarns about things living *in vacuo*, do you? We'll get through. God, we've got to!"

Lieutenant Stewart was silent for so long that Ferguson thought McFadden might have cut off without even a polite "over and out."

But the Hub Sector Commander came through once more, purposeful now. "Abner, you're already down for court-martial. Turn your fleet about! That order's straight from Supreme Command!"

Ferguson shrugged. Might as well go whole hog. "Tell SupCom to get back to their Acey-Deucey board."

Another pause, then Stewart's voice rose well above a whisper. "Goddard! Dwyer! Reiss! Anybody in earshot! Assume command from Admiral Ferguson! Confine him to quarters!"

Ferguson reached over and snapped off the psycom generator. The halo subsided about Stewart's head. Commander Goddard only glanced down at the deck.

The Admiral seared him with a severe stare. "ComHub didn't say anything about my command being assumed from under me. Understand?"

"Yes, sir. Nothing at all. At least, I didn't hear anything like that."

Ferguson thought wistfully of the Einsteinian era when the *c*-limitation had precluded cosmic communications just as it had ruled out translight velocities. But that was before psycom and psydrive gadgetry had upset the neoclassical apple cart.

Regardless, he resolved, the Fourteenth Earth Federation Fleet would shoot the Vortex gap tomorrow—come hell, high water, damnation, Admiral McFadden, SupCom or a combination of all five.

FERGUSON finished breakfast next morning alone in his cabin, deferring to the principle that the less conspicuous the flag officer, the more efficient will ship's company perform. The *Antares* he would leave singularly in Commodore Dwyer's hands.

He checked his chronometer. They would be breaking into Vortex's central cavity within twelve hours. If personnel trouble developed aboard any of the armada's vessels, it would likely come before then. Mutiny? Desertion? Not probable—but not impossible, he supposed. You couldn't expect to lead a million men into the malignant thing that blotted out the galaxy ahead without having to drag at least

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some of them along kicking and screaming.

Half an hour later Ferguson, making his way down the central passageway, pulled up short of the Wardroom. Within, the conversation of a handful of officers was rising occasionally above the purring throb of the ship's null-inertia field generators:

". . . damned right the Old Man's going to run into trouble."

"But does he have to pull us along with him? I don't . . ."

". . . fed up with that pursuit. Only way he can save his skin now is to pull off something spectacular."

"But I can't see how ComHub ever gave him the go ahead on this . . ."

At any rate, it was a normal, healthy type of bitching—innocuous enough, devoid of insurgency and wholly desirable from the standpoint of its relief-valve lue. And if they chose to think he was selfishly trying to restore his reputation—well, let them.

". . . makes no difference to Ferguson, does it?"

"Of course not. Sure the Old Man wants to defend Ulysses. I would too if I had a wife and family back there."

He waited until someone got around to challenging someone else to an Acey-Deucey game, then he went on into the Wardroom. This time he obliged with an instant "Carry on, men."

Lieutenant Stewart had paused in midstride, the Acey-Deucey board in his hands. His more or less constant companion, Commander Goddard, eased back in his chair. Ensigns Doughty and Schneider and Lieutenant Commander Cook, psydrive engineer, remained standing until Ferguson settled down at the table.

Seaman-Second Hillary drew the Admiral's customary cup of steaming, black coffee and brought it over. "What do you suppose we're likely to run into tonight, Admiral?" he asked.

"Nothing we won't be able to take care of," Ferguson snapped back with a conviction he didn't really feel.

PSYTECH Goddard leaned across the table. "You forget, sir, that in the past three—"

"—hundred years," the Admiral completed wearily, "umpteen dozen ships have piled up in that cloud of hydrogen. Don't quote the record, Commander. I know it by heart."

"But what do you think happened to those ships?" Stewart asked.

"Hallucinations?" Doughty proposed eagerly. "They were confused by hallucinations?"

Ferguson leaned back. "That's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a possibility. At least, some in the two surviving crews raved about—what was it?—worms in space?"

"Caterpillars," Ensign Schneider said.

Cook hunched his shoulders. "I understand it was centipedes."

"Whatever they were," Ferguson resumed, "they had to be hallucinations."

But Cook raised an eyebrow. "Wasn't any hallucination that raked four psydrive tubes off the *Celestial Queen*."

"No, it wasn't. Therefore there must be—something else also."

"*What* else?"

"Armament could have knocked off those tubes."

Psytech Goddard rose. "Admiral, are you suggesting there's a type of armed intelligence in Vortex Nebula?"

Ferguson smiled and sipped from his cup. "That is one of the things we shall find out, I rather imagine, sometime between twenty hundred tonight and twenty hundred day after tomorrow."

Lieutenant Commander Cook lit a cigarette and stared thoughtfully into its cloud of smoke. "An armed culture that sticks strictly to its own systems. But never venturing out into the galaxy?"

"Makes sense," Stewart said. "If I were squeezed between the Federation and Ramkian worlds, I suppose I'd try to make myself scarce too, confusing and knocking off only those ships that came snooping around."

"They'd need psyradar to detect us at trans-*c* velocities," Doughty pointed out.

"We don't have a monopoly on psy stuff, do we?"

After a moment of speculative silence, Schneider said, "But what kind of chance would we have—in their back yard?"

Ferguson paced to the percolator and back. "We have more things going for us than the Ramkian fleet did when it got lost in Vortex."

He counted the advantages off on his fingers. "We're forewarned. They weren't. We're going to barrel through the gap at ten lyph. The Ramkian fleet's top velocity was only slightly above one light year per hour. We're carrying the greatest concentration of firepower ever assembled in one armada. We'll get through—and in good enough condition to deploy in Ulysses Cluster and ambush the Ramkian attack forces."

"And what," Goddard asked, "if a lurking intelligence *isn't* the explanation?"

ROUTINE aboard the *Antares* must certainly be continuing at an orderly pace, Ferguson reasoned, as Commodore Dwyer strode casually into the Wardroom. Absence of the Skipper

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from his Bridge could imply only smooth operation.

Dwyer towered aloft in contrast to the diminutive Admiral. Possibly eight years younger, he was an impressively proportioned man whose full shock of gray hair, alert brown eyes and almost wrinkle-free face contradicted his actual age.

For Ferguson he had a respectful if not enthusiastic greeting. For the other officers there was only an expectant stare. And the Admiral smiled in silent appreciation of a flagship commander who could convey his wishes without benefit of spoken order.

Ensigns Doughty and Schneider collided as they both headed for the passageway.

"Excuse me, Skipper," said the latter over his shoulder, "but I'd better check on the *r*-counters."

"Yeah," Doughty agreed, grinning awkwardly. "We're really banging into hard light at this velocity. Lots of secondary radiation. Maybe we'd better step up the correctors."

More tactfully, Commander Goddard and Lieutenant Stewart hurriedly finished their coffee and made less conspicuous retreats.

Lieutenant Commander Cook extinguished his cigarette. "Got to change the detail on psydrive duty."

After Cook had gone, Dwyer called out to the seaman-second, "Hillary, take that damned percolator to the galley and scrub it out."

The compartment thus reduced to the occupancy of only top brass, Ferguson cupped his hands behind his head. "All right, John, what's on your mind?"

"I'm afraid we're headed for a lot of trouble," Dwyer said, hooking one leg over a corner of the table.

"How so?"

"A desertion, I think. At any rate, the *Bared Fang* is gone. Pulled out of formation an hour ago."

"That's McNaught's division, isn't it?"

Dwyer nodded. "We picked up the departure on psyradar. McNaught confirmed it. The *Fang* won't even answer our psycalls."

"I always figured that division for loose discipline." Ferguson sighed. "Crank up Mr. Stewart's halo. I'm going to bust McNaught on the spot and put his Exec in charge."

The Skipper paused, squinting. "Admiral, you don't think that's all the trouble we're going to have, do you? We've still eight hours to go before we plunge into Vortex's gap."

Ferguson glanced down into his hands as though they might be holding a crystal ball. "I'll be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

surprised if there are more than two more desertions."

Dwyer's jaw unhinged on a protest that had no opportunity for expression. For, at that moment, Chief Hewitt's lean figure materialized in the doorway, frozen like a picture in a frame.

"Yes?" Commodore Dwyer prompted.

"I've a problem, sir, that I think you should know about. It's Yeoman McAdams. He's a—Vicar of the Vortex."

"What in hell is a *Vicar of the Vortex?*"

Ferguson smiled. "It's an obscure religious sect. I've heard of it. McAdams must be a recruit from one of the Ulysses Cluster worlds—right, Chief?"

"Yes, sir," Hewitt confirmed. "We have him in Sick Bay. He's been frantic ever since he learned we're going into Vortex."

Down the passageway there was a coarse scream, punctuated by the staccato of shoes pounding on metal. Clad only in infirmary dishabille and appearing more like a kid for his lack of uniform, a terrified youth drew up in the doorway. His desperate stare sliced across the Wardroom. Then he charged in.

"Skipper! Admiral!" he shouted, waving a creased piece of paper. "Look at this! You can't go into the Vortex! Oh, God—you can't go in there!"

A pursuing medical corpsman overtook McAdams and twisted his arm behind his back. The paper he had flaunted fluttered to the table.

Ferguson recognized the reproduction. It represented one of Earth's priceless art bequests—priceless because the original had ceased to exist almost a thousand years ago. It was Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* that had dominated the Sistine Chapel in Rome from the Sixteenth to the Twenty-Third Centuries.

"Look at Him!" McAdams raved. "Look at Him in all His Might and Power and Glory. Humanity turned its back on Him. It was the Supreme Insult. He retreated to the last Holy Place in His Universe—to Vortex Nebula. And in His Just Wrath He smashes every ship that dares go in there!"

The yeoman lurched toward Ferguson but was pulled back and carried thrashing into the passageway.

II

M'ADAMS had acquired a convert to the Vicars of the Vortex. The neophyte might have gone unnoticed had it not been for Lieutenant Commander Cook's scrutiny of the blender gauge and one of the betameters in the ship's Propulsion Compartment. It was just prior to the first dogwatch, with less than

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

five hours remaining before the *Antares* would hurl herself into Vortex's gap. And the psydrive engineer wanted to make certain he was getting maximum velocity from his mixture of beta waves and hard-light particles.

He wasn't.

The blender gauge showed one perfect sine-wave pattern, confirming an orderly flow of trans-*c* photons into the propulsion tubes' scoops. But the oscilloscope's second squiggle was a hair out of phase. Not so orderly was the injected psycomponent. Somehow, the blender was loping as it fed beta waves into the linear accelerators. As a result, the concentric circles of drive tubes that ringed the *Antares* were not kicking out a flux mixture of the proper physical-metaphysical ratio. And recoil was faltering.

Frowning, Cook scratched deep into the furrows of his brow and backed off, surveying the twin banks of psydrive propulsionmen. Unconscious and strapped to their chairs, they wore the swirling halos that evidenced brisk generation of beta waves.

Slowly, he strode down the rows checking output gauges. And he soon singled out Propulsionman-First Hays as the weak link. Even the nimbus about his head, unsteady and flickering, offered clear indication that his metaphysical contribution to the driving force was substandard.

Cook switched off Hays' collector and set his come-to circuit for gradual arousal. Then he went to the squawk box and ordered up a standby propulsionman. Finally, he summoned the psytechnician.

Admiral Ferguson came down with Commander Goddard, but remained passively in the background while the situation was discussed.

"What's the trouble?" Goddard asked.

Cook pointed. "One of your boys just wasn't putting out."

"Hays? Good potential. High beta flux quality."

The propulsionman was just beginning to stir in his chair.

"His needle fell well below the green range." Cook held up his clip board. "Here are the readings. I jotted them down before I turned him off."

"Hm-m-m. Looks like the suppressor wasn't doing a total job of subduing his alpha output. We could step up the override circuit. But I'd rather take him in and give him a good psyching."

Unstrapping himself, the propulsionman came over. "I fouled up, didn't I? Sorry."

When nobody said anything, he went on: "I knew something was going wrong. First time I've had any dreams under the halo."

Goddard nodded and Admiral

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ferguson recognized the just-as-I-suspected quality of the gesture.

"Then there *was* alpha-wave activity," the psytech murmured. "What did you dream about, son?"

"McAdams and the Vicars and—"

"The Vortex Vicars? You're not one of them, are you, Hays?"

"Not yet, sir. But I'm supposed to be confirmed next time we make port in Ulysses Cluster. McAdams' going to nominate me himself."

THE *ANTARES*' intercom system broke into a susurrant rumble, then a tense voice swam through the background noise: "Admiral Ferguson respectfully requested on the Bridge. Urgent."

The Admiral left Goddard and Cook to their difficulties and hastened to the Command Compartment. There he acknowledged with a flick of his hand the unanimous leap to attention.

A junior officer came up. "Commodore Dwyer asks that you join him right away in Psyradar, Admiral."

Ferguson studied the now magnified sweep of Vortex Nebula on the omnidirectional screen as he struck out along the forward catwalk. The helical swirls of attenuated gases, fluorescing vividly under assault by ultraviolet emissions from the suns they enfolded, were like a sinister whirlpool. As he went through the opening in the screen into the adjoining room, it was as though he were being sucked into the Nebula's yawning central cavity.

The Psyradar Compartment was another sphere, half the size of the one he had just left. Suspended at its center was a smaller platform ringed by a circle of beta-wave collector chairs, every other one occupied by a transmitterman. Between them were the receivermen.

Ferguson closed the door behind him and clung to the catwalk's railing. Dead ahead once again was Vortex Nebula, as though there were nowhere he could go in the ship to escape its derisive presence. Aft, that section of the psyradar screen through which he had entered was ablaze with the immense clusters and giant stars that seemed to crowd one another for elbow room near the Hub.

The galactic scene as portrayed here, however, was not identical to the one on the Control Compartment screen. Psyradar fetched, instead, an impression of the galaxy as it existed *now*, contravening Einstein's denial of the simultaneity concept. For beta waves were broadcast, bounced off their celestial targets, received and pro-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

jected on the luminescent sphere with a time lapse of zero.

IN the half-darkness a hand touched his elbow. "If you'll come over here, sir," said a voice he recognized as Commodore Dwyer's, "I have something I think will interest you."

Ferguson followed the other, mounting a dais in the center of the platform. Pointing out over the heads of the psyradarmen, the Commodore exclaimed, "There!"

It was a moment before the Admiral could discern the orderly line of tiny red dots that extended across the spherical surface aft. It was the Fourteenth Earth Federation Fleet, arrayed in formation and strung out over one-sixteenth of a light year.

"Good echelon," he commented.

"Randall," Dwyer called down to a psyradar tech, "give us a blowup on the Southern Polar sector."

The string of dots flared brilliantly, stretching out several times its length. And now Ferguson could see the considerable displacement of one of the ships from the line.

"There." He pointed. "Near the end. Someone's pulling out."

"The *Gamecock*. She's deserting. Gone silent, too—just like the *Bared Fang*."

The Admiral's shoulders sagged. "I'll lay odds Commander Wadsworth had nothing to do with it. His men must have mutinied. Don't you suppose?"

"That's not the point," Dwyer grumbled. "I'm sure every other ship in the fleet is wondering whether the *Gamecock* and the *Bared Fang* did the right thing."

"Are you questioning ComHub strategy?" Ferguson challenged, wondering how the other would react if he knew the Fourteenth Fleet was acting, rather, in direct disregard of orders.

"No, sir. I'm just questioning the license of some units to violate orders—and get away with it."

Ferguson glanced back at the psyradar screen. "Order all ships in that division to open fire on the *Gamecock*."

Dwyer looked away in obvious dissatisfaction. "You can read the screen well enough to know the *Gamecock* is out of range."

Faced with the Admiral's continued silence, Dwyer started across the platform, resentment implicit in his brisk stride. "With your permission, sir, I'll return to my Bridge."

Ferguson followed him as far as the catwalk, then paused to stare pensively at the galactic blaze on the spherical screen. Dwyer had, of course, wanted him to issue a blanket order that all ships leaving formation were to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be gunned out of space. But he couldn't do that—not when the only authority they were flouting was his own surreptitious one.

Ferguson's purchase on the rail tightened until his nails bit into the heels of his hands. They had to get through Vortex! It was their only chance of saving Ulysses Cluster and preventing the Federation from being split down the middle.

If only five hundred ships could make it! They could take up stations and draw from great stores of clustered stellar energy and lay down a barrage that would decimate a dozen Ramkian fleets!

He passed his hand over his brow. Was his recklessness, he wondered, intended to serve only absolute defense requirements? Or was he really going through Vortex because of Ellen and their grandchildren—so vulnerable on his home world in Ulysses Cluster?

Somehow he felt hopelessly confused and disappointed that, at his age, he still couldn't separate logic from sentiment, true military values from the quiltwork of emotion.

EVENING mess was served in an atmosphere charged with suspense. At Admiral Ferguson's table there was only dense silence among his aides. But, he conceded, the two hours which separated them from Vortex Nebula left little room for casual conversation.

During the main course, General Quarters sounded stridently. Without even glancing up at the commotion of ship's personnel charing out into the passageways, Ferguson speared another piece of steak, aware that all eyes at his table were upon him. The point did not require laboring: The Fourteenth Fleet had its orders; division and ship commanders would deal with specific exigencies as they arose; and it was further taken for granted that emergencies jeopardizing the over-all mission of the force would be referred promptly to the flag level.

His aides remained seated.

The *Antares* lurched and quivered as her stern batteries opened fire. Two minutes later the vibrations ceased and raucous sirens choked off a final high-pitch wail. In another ten minutes, ship's officers were filtering back into the Wardroom.

Commodore Dwyer came directly to the Admiral's table. He mopped perspiration from his forehead and used an unsteady hand to restore a semblance of order to his thatch of cold-gray hair.

"I assume your gunners bagged what they were shooting at," Ferguson said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dwyer flashed a hesitant grin. "On the fourth salvo, sir."

"And what was it?"

"We have a fairly good idea. The main cyber shows that at 1730 hours—" Here he paused and mustered another weak smile. "At 1730 hours the galley ejected a refuse capsule through the stern disposal hatch."

Ferguson sipped from his cup. "I hardly think your spotters and gun crews rate a citation for that performance. Outside of garbage capsules, is Psyradar picking up anything else close in?"

"Nothing but the rest of the fleet—one ship fewer than the last time we counted noses."

Ferguson returned to his meal. At least, the reaction of ship's complement had shown the men wanted to believe that whatever awaited them in Vortex Nebula was something tangible—something which would show up accommodatingly in their gun sights.

* * *

Fifteen minutes later, Ferguson strode into the Communications Compartment and flung his cap on the bench.

Commander Goddard bounded from a chair and tossed aside his microviewer, not even bothering to mark his place. Stewart hopped to, but broke his rigid military posture to pocket a tri-D-scope that had been enlivening the compartment with its projected, full-scale image of an attractive blonde in the briefest of beachwear. Red-faced, he returned stiffly to attention.

"Crank him up." The Admiral gestured toward Stewart, then dropped into Goddard's chair to await preparations.

The psytech worked swiftly, securing the Lieutenant in his harness and energizing the generator. While the halo built up around Stewart's head, Goddard said:

"I'm afraid I'm working myself into a hell of a hole, Admiral. ComHub keeps directing me to call Commodore Dwyer to the hookup."

"They still want to pass down my command?"

Goddard nodded. "And, by not going along with them, I'm hanging myself by that by which it is most painful to be hanged."

Ferguson sighed. "Goddard, we're *all* going to be hanged by the same things if the Ramkians take Ulysses Cluster."

"I realize that. If I didn't believe you're doing the only plausible thing, I'd have called Dwyer long ago."

Ferguson cuffed him on the shoulder. "We'll come out of it all right. And neither ComHub nor SupCom will have another word to say about the decisions any of us have made out here."

The Commander appeared somewhat reassured. "By the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

way," he added, "ComHub's trying to raise some of your division commanders."

"Which they can't do unless you tell those commanders which long-range psyfrequencies to guard."

Stewart was ready. Goddard set him off and stuck with him until contact was established with ComHub. Then the Admiral took over.

"This is Ferguson for Admiral McFadden," he shouted at Stewart.

"Admiral McFadden's off station at the moment," the Lieutenant whispered. "This is Admiral Bankhauser."

Ferguson allowed himself a puckish smile. Here, at last, was someone he outranked. "What's the Ulysses situation?"

"Admiral Ferguson, I'm under instructions to order you—"

"What's the Ulysses situation?" Ferguson insisted on a reply.

"Outpost psyradar stations have spotted two additional Ramkian fleets bearing down on the Cluster. The ETAs of all four units are synchronized for 2000 Thursday. That's ninety-six hours off."

"What is Supreme Command's strategy?"

"Sir, I'm not supposed to—"

"Admiral Bankhauser, you will fully advise me on what counteraction is shaping up."

"We've dispatched five fleets. They'll of course arrive there too late to defend the Cluster. They'll simply be on hand in case the enemy decides to launch an offensive down the Arm."

"Are we evacuating Ulysses?"

"You know there's no time for that."

Ferguson forced further into the back of his mind Ellen's almost irrepressible image. "Tell McFadden the Fourteenth Fleet will reach Ulysses Cluster two days ahead of the Ramkians."

AT 1945—just fifteen minutes the *Antares* would push into Vortex Nebula's central cavity—Admiral Ferguson rose abruptly from his Wardroom table. The sharp sound of his chair skittering back was like a gunshot in the quiet, strained compartment.

He yawned ostentatiously and said, "Think I'll turn in."

From their incredulous expressions, he could tell his performance had had its intended effect on the scores of officers who had witnessed it. No one would think he was ducking out. For the *Antares* was an independent organism which didn't require his attention. And, by not deviating from his normal routine, he was merely demonstrating unqualified confidence in the vessel and her crew.

He even overheard some of their bewildered comments as he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pushed on down the passageway: "Can you imagine that? The Old Man's hitting the sack!" "No wonder they used to call him 'Gutty' Ferguson." "Well, what would you expect of a flag who wouldn't think twice of butting heads with Vortex?" ". . . as calm as if we were laying to in the middle of Coalsack."

Actually, Abner Ferguson was not quite as composed as the men were inclined to imagine. In his cabin, he merely loosened his belt and lay back across the bunk, hands folded beneath his head.

He checked his chronometer: 2004. The *Antares* was entering Vortex Nebula's barrel now—a helpless mote swimming among the feathery wisps that stretched ahead for almost five hundred light years before thinning out and releasing space once more to clear, black nothingness.

Beyond would be the small but intensely brilliant Ulysses Cluster, a magnificent tiara crowning the sinister corkscrew of the Nebula.

Two low-throated growls issued from the flagship's sirens, signaling a Pink Alert. And he listened to hatches clanging shut as the second dogwatch was relieved.

Eventually he dropped off into light slumber. But this development was more a measure of fatigue than of nonchalance in the face of the lurking perils that surrounded the fleet now.

"Abner?"

"Yes, Ellen?"

"I'm with you, darling—always, any place you go."

"I know that, dear."

"You will *come back, Ab?"*

"I'll be back, honey."

"And you'll take that leave?"

"Every hour I have coming."

"We'll visit little Bottie and Fred and Grace."

"And on the way back we'll drop off and see the rest of our grandchildren."

"They're fine kids, Ab."

"The very best."

In his half-sleep, he smiled and rubbed his cheek into the warmth of the pillow. Then he opened his eyes and saw Ellen standing there in his cabin, bringing cheer and comfort—so appealing, so sincere, so attractive even despite her almost six decades. It was a wonderful dream. He only wished that every time he went to sleep he could fancy her being here like that.

"You'll make it through the Nebula, won't you, Abner?"

He smiled. *"You can bet the homestead on it, honey. We're a couple of hours into this thing and nothing's happened so far."*

Her image wavered and faded and he surrendered himself back to dreamless sleep because the cabin seemed so drab without her.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

III

CONDITION red sirens brought him lunging up and he swayed in the middle of the cabin for a moment before he could get his bearings. It was 0145. He had slept almost five hours! He hitched his belt and stumbled out into the passageway.

Condition Red superseded every requirement of naval etiquette, tore down the barriers between Officers' Country and the rest of the ship and reduced extreme rank to something to be pushed aside if it got in the way. Each officer and noncom had his station. If getting into position meant climbing over the prostrate form of even the Admiral of the Navy, such action was to be taken without even a by-your-leave-sir. Thus Ferguson was jostled thoughtlessly out of the way a number of times as he hastened along the corridors.

He finally burst in upon the Bridge but drew back from an omni-directional screen that was being fed no-time-lapse impressions from Psyradar. It showed all space seething with great malignant forms—twisted, segmented, serpentine bodies that tapered off into filamentous nothingness. Even more horrible were their cavernous mouths, ringed by many flexing hooks and darting forward again and again to snap at the flagship. The Admiral found himself beside Commodore Dwyer, who was shouting orders in all directions.

Off the port beam, the grotesque head of one of the monsters thrust forward and Ferguson ducked instinctively.

A salvo from her heavy batteries jarred the *Antares*, sending her recoiling starboard. Three novalike bursts swamped the screen. When normal luminescence was restored, the attacking worm was visible again, but without a head. Its seared forward segments lashed violently back and forth while the immense body coiled and uncoiled all down its length.

But two more of the creatures were darting forward now and drawing fire from the starboard batteries.

Ferguson caught Dwyer's arm. "What in hell are they, John?"

"You figure that out for yourself, Admiral. I'm too busy fighting them off."

One of the creatures attacking abaft the starboard beam was blown in half and the other withdrew, recoiling in snakelike motion. But half a dozen more were pressing the assault from the dorsal and ventral quarters.

"Jackson!" Dwyer shouted. "Get your bow gunners into action. A couple of those damned things are about to meet us head-on!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The forward crews opened up and Ferguson swore. "How in the name of Heaven can those things match our ten-lyph speed?"

"Maybe your 'armed race' of Vortex dwellers equipped them with psydrive afterburners in their tail segments," the Commodore said.

But Ferguson ignored the gibe. "Did we alert the rest of the fleet?"

"Didn't have to. Most of the other ships started catching this before we did."

"Is it a general attack?"

"No, sir. Sporadic. Been in progress off and on for three hours, though."

"And you didn't call me?"

"I didn't think the Admiral wanted to be disturbed." Dwyer's sarcasm was not buried very deep.

A dozen more snapping, evil heads swam to within yards of the *Antares* and every gun aboard fell into a sustained salvo that ringed the ship with brilliant bursts.

Dwyer threw up his hands. "You're the big brass, Admiral. Any suggestions?"

Ferguson, however, evaded the question, dismally feeling that, with his Vortex plunge, he had certainly set into motion more than he could hope to control.

"Psyradar reporting, Skipper," shouted another noncom. "Says the echelon shows up on their screen with jagged gaps. They estimate we've lost at least a couple of hundred ships."

"Are they picking up any more worms than the ones they're piping onto our screen?"

The noncom relayed the question, then called back. "Yes, sir. Space for miles ahead looks like a maggots' nest, they say."

Suddenly Ferguson saw what should be done. "We'll play the hunch that these things don't have the inertial mobility we do. Make sure our null-I field is up to snuff, then jam on the brakes to cut our speed down by a fraction of a light year. If they can't match that, then they'll just go sailing on ahead."

But the desperate maneuver wasn't necessary. For just then the omnidirectional screen regained full brilliance and displayed volumes of clear space with no trace of a worm.

FOR half an hour the Commodore and Ferguson leaned silently upon the rail, side by side, eyes boring into the depths of the omnidirectional screen, tense against the anitcipated return of the worms. But outside the ship the vacuum of space was but a satiny nothingness.

Listlessly, Dwyer cautioned, "Watch that railing, Admiral. It's loose. We haven't had a chance to fix it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ferguson tested the barrier. It rattled in his grip and he moved aside. "Well, I guess that's all from the worms for now."

"I wouldn't get my hopes up. We still have forty hours to go." Dwyer lighted a cigarette and let the smoke fall from his mouth. "Matthews, what's with the rest of the fleet?"

"One destroyer squadron and parts of two light darter divisions still under attack, sir. We're waiting for a rundown on losses."

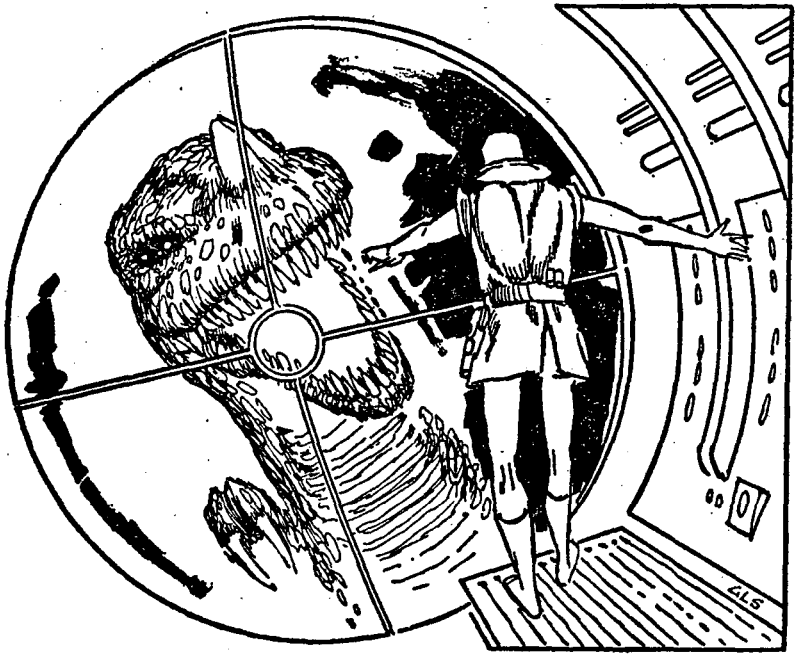
"Do we have a preliminary estimate?"

"Yes, sir. One hundred and eighty-six ships missing. Twenty others reported making repairs under way."

Ferguson stared numbly at the huge, curving screen. All around the *Antares* now were the great coils and folds of Vortex Nebula —menacing in their eerie brilliance.

Almost two hundred ships gone in the first eight hours! It was disastrous! But, on the other hand, at that rate eight hundred vsesels of the Fourteenth Fleet would emerge safely from the gap—more than enough to defend Ulysses Cluster.

He scanned the forward sec-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion of the screen for a glimpse down the barrel of the Nebula. He could even see some of the brighter stars of Ulysses Cluster, standing out in sharp contrast. But so far away.

"You don't think I did the right thing by leading the Fleet in here, do you, Dwyer?" he asked.

The Commodore bristled. "Since you're asking a direct question—hell no! We're just throwing away a good fighting unit that will be desperately needed in five or six months."

Commander Goddard and Lieutenant Stewart, crossing the Bridge after having been relieved in the Psycom Compartment, paused abreast of Ferguson.

"How's it going, Admiral?" the psytech asked.

"We've taken a good drubbing so far."

"Think we'll make it through the gap?"

FERGUSON was grateful for Stewart's involuntary yawn that drew the attention of the others away from him.

"I've had it!" the junior officer exclaimed. "I'm hitting the sack while there's still a sack to hit."

He stumbled off mumbling, "If we think we got trouble, what about the Eighth Heavy Launcher Division? Dinosaurs, stomping around in space, yet!"

Goddard followed him off, casting a glance back in Dwyer's direction. It impressed Ferguson as being a speculative stare. Was the psytech wistfully sizing up Dwyer for command of the Fourteenth Fleet?

Sudden appearance of Captain Dawson, in charge of the *Antares'* medical detachment, brought Ferguson around to the abrupt realization that there might have been some casualties sustained indirectly as a result of the spaceworm assault.

Dawson pulled up in front of Commodore Dwyer. "I'm afraid you might have a problem on your hands, sir."

"Disciplinary?"

"Not quite—well, yes, that too. It involves Hillary."

"The Wardroom orderly?"

"Yes, sir. Somehow he got his hands on a hypodermic syringe and a few ccs of somniferene. Thought he'd inject himself and sleep calmly through the next couple of days. But all that heavy firing set up some kind of threshold reaction. And he snapped out of it."

"Is he all right now?"

"Physically, yes. But he keeps shouting about those worms attacking the ship and their horrible mouths and hooks. I'd rather not try sedation—not after that somniferene."

"We'll isolate him so he doesn't stir up the other men."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"We already have him isolated."

"Then what do you expect me to do—other than come down on him with both heels for dereliction when he's well enough to appear before Captain's Mast?"

Annoyed, Dawson shook his head. "You don't get the picture, Commodore. Hillary conked out long before that attack started. When he came to, there was only a medical corpsman in attendance who told him—nothing. Yet he *knew* all that had happened—the attack, the repulsion, the disappearance of the worms, everything."

"He felt vibrations from the batteries," Ferguson guessed. "And there's been all that suggestive talk over the past few days. Didn't take much imagination for him to guess what was going on."

"Down to minute details? Even a full description of the worms?"

* * *

Half an hour later Dwyer, relieved on the Bridge by his Exec, accompanied Admiral Ferguson back toward Officers' Country.

The Commodore followed Ferguson up a companionway and murmured, "Of course Hillary knew what to expect as far as the details of those worms went. I've run across a dozen or so artists' conceptions of the things. Used to be a rash of imaginative drawings every time a ship failed to report in the Vortex region."

"Most of the ones I've seen held to the centipede description."

"Quite the reverse for me. And for Hillary too, I'd guess."

They turned a corner, entered a larger passageway and drew up sharply. Ahead two noncoms were approaching. One held up a well-creased sheet of paper which he appeared to be reading. The other was gesturing occasionally with his right hand, sweeping it in an arc first in one direction, then another.

"You men up there!" Dwyer shouted. "What are you doing in Officers' Country?"

The first looked up and Ferguson recognized him as Yeoman McAdams. The paper, he could see also, was the reproduction of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*. The other man was McAdams' convert to the Vicards of the Vortex—Propulsionman Hays.

McAdams approached, half apologetic, half petulant. "We're blessing the ship, sir. We're saving her from God's Wrath."

Dwyer's fists found their way to his hips. "Either of you supposed to be on duty?" he demanded.

"No, sir," said Hays.

"Then get out of Officers' Country and return to your quarters—on the double!"

"But, sir," McAdams persist-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ed. "God is out there in His Nebula! He has sent His Legions after us as a warning. We're trying to appease—"

"Get the hell out of here before I have you spacehauled!"

Constrained, the pair hurried on down the passageway and disappeared into the noncom area.

Dwyer swore. "Damned, stupid—"

But he had no opportunity to complete the epithet. For just then their attention was drawn by a din of shouts and whistles coming from the passageway they had just left.

FERGUSON went back to the junction and stared puzzledly down the other corridor. Dwyer, at his side, exclaimed, "Well, I'll be damned! Do you see *that?*"

Indeed the Admiral did, despite his reluctance to believe his eyes. The harsh light of the passageway played upon bare flesh as a nude, young woman raced forward, flaxen hair streaming out behind. With her was an equally naked young man who glanced back desperately at the score of noncoms chasing them.

Somehow it seemed to Ferguson that there was an air of horseplay about the pursuit, with its spirited whistles and lusty shouts.

"A stowaway!" Dwyer exclaimed, stepping forward to head off the couple.

Ferguson went along. "Who's that with her?"

Dwyer had no answer. Judging from the man's ample size and crewcut, the Admiral imagined he might well be the psycom officer, Lieutenant Stewart. But facial details were obscured as a result of backlighting.

Seeing the Commodore standing there with arms outstretched, the nude man seized the girl and pulled her abruptly into a side compartment.

Ferguson, Dwyer and the noncoms reached the door at the same time. Chief Hewitt was among the latter and it was apparent from his grim expression, that he had not been attracted to the chase by the opportunity it had offered for horseplay.

"It's a woman stowaway, Admiral," he explained. "Nobody knows how she got aboard. I've already reported her to the Exec."

The other noncoms had clamped their mouths shut.

"Who's the man with her?" Ferguson asked.

"I don't know, sir."

Dwyer banged on the door, but got no response. His subsequent shouting, however, aroused several officers quartered along the passageway. Lieutenant Stewart, smothering a yawn, was among the first to appear on the scene.

"What's all the commotion?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"A woman stowaway and one of the noncoms are hiding in that gear locker," Chief Hewitt explained. Then he directed the man beside him, "Get a torch. We'll cut them out of there."

But fifteen minutes later, after the acetylene flame had sliced through the door, inspection of the locker showed it to be empty.

ADMIRAL Ferguson managed, but barely, to get some sleep during the remainder of the morning watch. It was not restful slumber, however. Nor was it uninterrupted.

Ellen came back several times, as she nearly always did when he slept. Once she brought little Dottie and Fred with her and he bounced the baby on his knee and laughed heartily while the boy ransacked his locker, found a dress uniform cap and tried it on. The thing swallowed the kid down to his chin, wobbling under the weight of all the gold braid on its visor.

They didn't stay long, Ellen and the grandchildren. They never did when they visited him like this. And after they had gone he lay forsakenly awake.

For the thousandth time he asked himself the question: Had he done right in leading the Fourteenth Fleet into Vortex Nebula? Of course he had! Shooting the gap was the only action that could satisfy all requirements. Earth Federation would be in critical straits if the Ramkians captured Ulysses Cluster. That his defense of the Cluster also offered the only hope of saving Ellen and the kids was a convenient blend of circumstances.

And now he realized, too, why the fleet had followed him so willingly into Vortex: Most of its personnel had been recruited from the Cluster; the majority also had Ellens and Dotties and Freds to worry about.

Toward the end of the morning watch he was awakened again to receive a report of continuing sporadic assaults on fleet units by worms, centipedes, caterpillars, dinosaurs and even giant amoebae. Incredulous as the accounts were, he nevertheless ordered divisions drawn into tight conical formations for collective defense.

After that, little interest remained in sleep. The ship's time signal system sounded 0800, ushering in the forenoon watch and reminding Ferguson that they were one-fourth of the way through the gap. Thirty-six hours to go. But things could be expected to get progressively rougher from here on.

He rose and glanced at the locker. Some of his uniforms had fallen off their hangers and two of the drawers were open, their sartorial contents half spilled

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

upon the floor. On the deck near the bunk he found his dress cap —the one little Fred had worn so comically.

Then he laughed aloud, chiding himself for having added somnambulism to his eccentricities—solely toward the end of accommodating verisimilitude in his dream. Then, more soberly, he realized how very much he wanted to see Ellen and his grandchildren, bounce Dottie on his knee, split his sides over the ludicrous sight of little Fred trying on his cap and uniform coat.

ONLY Commander Goddard was in the Wardroom when Ferguson checked in for breakfast.

"Morning, Admiral," the psytech said, red-eyed and sour. "Didn't see you during the last go-around."

"There was another engagement?"

"At 0600. More worms—mixed up with centipedes this time, however. Don't tell me you slept through it. I guess they didn't call you 'Gutty' for nothing."

"We got through in good shape?"

"Good enough, I guess. The Skipper has a crew outside now repairing a couple of psydrive tubes."

The Admiral looked up sharply. "What happened?"

"One of those worms managed to sink a solid hook into us."

Ferguson choked on his coffee. Scratch one good and attractive theory. "Well, I suppose that rules out hallucinations."

"Very neatly, I'd say. And just when I was inclining heavily in that direction, as I naturally would after hearing Mr. Stewart tell about the naked woman incident."

The Admiral, too, had been tending somewhat toward the hallucination hypothesis. In connection with the nude blonde episode, though, he had held back one nagging reservation. The girl had somehow seemed familiar. It was as though he had known her before or had at least seen her once or twice. She had been richly endowed with that sort of memorable beauty. As a matter of fact, she had even reminded him of Ellen, minus forty or so years.

Chief Hewitt came in and arrayed his beanpole height in a stiff posture of attention beside the table.

"Yes, Chief?" Ferguson stared up at him.

"Report on losses, sir—from Psycom and Psyradar surveys: Eight hundred and seventy-two ships unaccounted for."

Ferguson started, then dismissed the CPO. Almost half the fleet gone! And they were only a fourth of the way through Vortex!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It's a calamity!" Commander Goddard exclaimed.

"I never dreamed—I—" Ferguson retreated from the verbal admission that there was no hope of getting *any* of the ships through the gap—much less enough to defend Ulysses Cluster.

Goddard laid a hand on his shoulder. "Maybe we both guessed wrong. Perhaps Dwyer should have taken over. Maybe we ought to have our collective heads examined."

But Ferguson was lost in his thoughts. Centipedes. Worms. Dinosaurs. Amoebae. It was ridiculous, unthinkable. Yet there *was* that crew outside the *Antares* repairing damaged tubes.

Condition Red sirens wailed and the Admiral knocked his chair over as he launched himself toward the Bridge.

IV

THE main Control Compartment was an uproar of confused voices and a blur of scurrying forms as Ferguson broke in on the scene.

"Psyradar from Bridge!" the Exec shouted into a microphone. "Pipe your stuff onto the main screen!"

The fire control officer, gripping another mike, was hurling preliminary instructions to the *Antares'* gun crews.

Off to the left, a spotter called out, "Bogies two points off the port bow! Elevation plus forty-five!"

Commodore Dwyer sidled toward the Admiral. "All right, Screen Control, let's have a ten-factor blowup on that sector!" Then, grinning: "Admiral, I think we've got it at last! Something logical and understandable—something that'll fit snugly in our gun sights."

A pinpoint section of the screen flared outward, occupying almost all of the luminescent bulkhead on the port side of the compartment. And Ferguson strained forward incredulously.

"Ships!" Dwyer exclaimed. "Ramkian?"

"No, not Ramkian. Ships like we've never seen before!"

Ferguson stared at the hundreds of alien vessels. The closer ones loomed large on the screen—immense, spherical, devoid of anything that resembled psydrive propulsion tubes, but bristling with projectile muzzles that made them look like spiked balls.

"Don't you see?" Dwyer continued, elated. "*Vortexan* ships! They've been softening us up with their preliminary stuff for the past fourteen hours. Now they're coming in for the kill!"

Ferguson felt the same jubilation over having something solid within reach. It made no difference that the enemy ships were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an engineering travesty, that their spherical form must catch optimum hell from the headon assault of hard light. Here were *targets!*

He stepped forward. "Gyro Control—yaw us around sixty degrees to starboard; forty-five degrees clockwise on the X-axis! All port batteries fuse thermonuclear charges! Psycom, stand by to relay division orders! Psydrive, throttle down and match speed with bogies; pick up coordinates and velocities from Psyradar! Internal Control, engage null-inertia field boosters!"

Commodore Dwyer, in his eagerness for action, didn't seem to mind having his Bridge snatched out from under him. "You don't suppose they haven't spotted us yet, do you?"

"If they haven't, they're in for a hell of a surprise. Take over here, John, while I call up the other divisions. They'll want in on something like this for a change."

THE *Antares* rolled lazily as she brought her port batteries to bear on target. Ferguson hurried to the nearest available mike and donned a headset. He punched Psycom on the call board and promptly got Commander Goddard.

"Psycom standing by, sir," Goddard assured as soon as the Admiral identified himself. "I've got halos on Stewart, Robertson, Andover, Briggs and Goldmann."

"Very well. Order the Second Light Darter Division to cover us to starboard. The Twelfth and Thirteenth Destroyer Divisions are to deploy to port of the bogies. I want the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth TN Divisions to steam up directly astern of target. Third Heavy Plunger and Squadrons Able, Baker and Fox of the Fourth Heavy Plunger Divisions are to execute a broad Constantine Arc and drop in from the dorsal quarter. All units stand by!"

"Bogies opening fire!" warned one of the spotters.

The luminescent screen glowed like a summer's night full of fireflies as exploding charges filled space with brilliant bursts that paled the radiant nebulosity surrounding the *Antares.*

"Starboard batteries, open fire!" Ferguson ordered.

And the flagship trembled in ceaseless recoil.

"Radanalysis!" Dwyer called out. "Let's have a rundown on what the Vortexans are hurling."

Several seconds later a noncom shouted back. "Radanalysis says it's not nuclear, sir. Not chemical either."

"How about psydynamic?"

The noncom relayed the question and, after a moment, answered, "Not that either. They say they don't know what it is."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

More shells—if that's what they were—burst close to the *Antares*, each one swamping the luminescent screen over a small area.

Then the flagship's heavy stuff started finding its targets. Ferguson ordered another ten-factor blowup on the appropriate sector of the screen and watched in intense satisfaction as ship after ship of the Vortexan fleet disintegrated under the barrage.

By now one of the TN divisions had pulled into position and was pounding away at the enemy from his rear.

"Like routine target practice, eh Admiral?" Dwyer laughed. "If they don't deploy out of their tight pack, there won't be any enemy left in another fifteen minutes."

It was indeed easy, Ferguson reflected. So easy that he might have become suspicious if he hadn't, instead, been preoccupied with the forward section of the luminescent screen. There he could see the end of Vortex Nebula's gap. It was still far away—over three hundred light years off. But the terminal whirls of nebulous clouds and the brilliant stars of Ulysses Cluster beyond seemed almost close enough to touch, now that the enemy had finally shown himself in true form.

Someone thrust a mike and headset into the Admiral's hands. But even before he could get the phones to his ears he heard Commander Goddard's excited voice:

"Eighth TN Division in position, sir. But the Second Light Darter and the Thirteenth Destroyer Divisions say they can't maneuver. Too busy fighting off centipedes. No response from the Seventh TN or the Third Heavy Plunger—"

ON the port side of the Bridge a guttural scream rose above the clamor of control activity. When Ferguson looked, one of the spotters was hopping around on his left foot while holding the other. Beside him another noncom was flaying the deck with an illuminated pointer rod.

"What in hell—" Dwyer began.

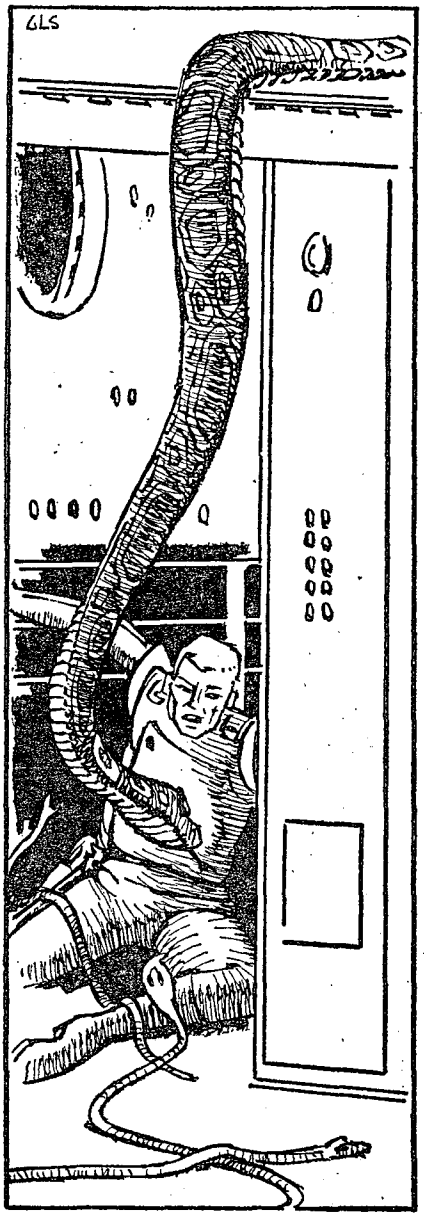
But an ensign and a warrant officer lunged back from the control computer, arms upthrust before them.

Perplexed, Ferguson jumped out of their way. But in doing so he stepped on something soft and squashy. He thought it was a rope—until the other end of the thing began flaying his legs.

"Snakes!" someone cried. "Snakes all over the Bridge!"

Alarmed, Ferguson leaped away from the thing beneath his feet, but managed only to come down on another violently thrashing form. Dwyer was hav-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



ing his own trouble evading the serpents. He fell back against the rail and a sinuous shape, coiled around a support rod, lanced out, barely missing his arm.

Vibrations from the ship's heavy guns stopped and the fire control officer shouted from between his headphones: "Snakes in the gun compartments!"

Lights were finally turned up on the Bridge, casting glaring illumination on a chaotic scene. Everyone was leaping frantically about, trying to avoid consoles and computers, struts and chairs, communications gear and cables that were infested with hissing, striking reptiles.

The spotter who had sounded the alarm lay motionless on the deck. Three other men had also collapsed and a fourth was wrestling in the coils of a huge serpent.

Ferguson and Dwyer had each snatched metal screen pointers from their rack and were flogging the railing and deck about them.

The Admiral swung his weapon at a huge python hanging down from a horizontal support bar. But before the stick made contact, the serpent had disappeared.

A strained silence descended on the Bridge. All the snakes were gone.

Trembling, Dwyer stared at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Admiral. "Hallucinations?" he asked, "A diversionary tactic to protect the Vortexan fleet?"

But Ferguson had gone over to the unconscious spotter. Another man knelt beside him, pointing to the fang punctures in his ankle.

"Hank's dead," the man quavered. "So's Hal and Joe and Garret. Pooor Hank. He was scared to death of snakes. That's why he signed on for another hitch. But they got him anyway—way out here."

Commodore Dwyer broke the solemn quiet. "All hands back to stations! We've got an engagement on our hands! Chief Hewitt, order up replacements and take the casualties to Sick Bay! Bridge Control, douse the lights and get our screen back on!"

But when the bulkhead swam back into luminescence, the enemy fleet was gone.

Then a spotter called out, "Bogie drifting in off the port quarter!"

Screen Control blew up that sector. And Ferguson felt a sense of relief on seeing the ruptured, helpless enemy vessel. At least, the Vortexan fleet itself hadn't been a diversionary hallucination.

The bristling sphere floated lazily against the nebulous background, turning end over end as it approached. Now the Admiral could see that it was split almost in half, hanging together only by a section of its spherical surface. Slowly, the two hemispheres opened and closed like a great floral carnivore.

When it was a hundred yards away, the *Antares* sent out a fending beam that caught one of the half spheres and nudged it away from the other. And Ferguson stared anxiously at the interior of the vessel.

He started. There was *nothing* inside—only the featureless, thin, curving inner surface of the hull.

THE "enemy engagement" had taken up most of the morning aboard the *Antares*. An hour after it had ended on its altogether irrational note, Ferguson had a late lunch in the Wardroom. No one mentioned Vortexan ships that were even more starkly empty than the hollow metal sphere of a Van de Graaff generator. Nor was anything said about the fourteen snakebite fatalities and the twenty-three other casualties now in Sick Bay.

Ferguson tried to banish the obstinate imcomprehensibility of the encounter from his mind. But it persisted, together with an equally incredible development aboard the *Nova Hurler* in the Eighth Thermonuclear Division that had pressed the attack upon the enemy's rear.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

During the height of that engagement, the *Nova Hurler* had gone out of control and lost psycom contact with the rest of the ships in her division. And, after the Vortexan fleet had withdrawn, the division flagship had pulled abeam and hooked onto the helpless TN. Division Commander Burke's report was still ringing in Ferguson's ear:

"My boarding detail sliced into the airlock and was instantly hurled back by a spray of ice crystals. The hatch was filled with *water!* Every bit of free space throughout the *Nova Hurler* was filled with water! It was ghastly, Admiral. That entire crew floating about in their ship —like rats!"

Snakes aboard the *Antares.* Water throughout the *Nova Hurler.* And one of the ships in the Thirteenth Destroyer Division had reported a plague of scorpions that had vanished as abruptly as they had appeared.

All evidence pointed to an unguessable technology wielded with unbelievable efficiency by an enemy who must certainly have a potential for psy manipulation that paled the faltering human capacity in that field. Dynamic psychic effects *had* to be the weapon that was producing in space and aboard the ships of the Fourteenth Fleet not hallucinations, but actual hostile items drawn from the background of human experience and endowed with brief reality.

Ferguson conceded that the Vortexans must know much about human makeup and behavior. Then, as he pushed his untouched food aside, he wondered why he was so willing to believe in an armed Vortex Nebula culture. Was he only refusing to come to grips with something infinitely more unmanageable? He thought of McAdams and Hays and the Vicars of the Vortex and their belief that the Nebula was the last refuge of an Almighty Force. But he thought of them only briefly.

Then he laughed. But only weakly.

IN the Communications Compartment Ferguson collected the latest psytransmitted reports on losses. And he blanched when he added up the total: Eleven hundred and twenty-eight fighting ships lost out of two thousand!

And they still had almost six hours to go before they would be halfway through Vortex Nebula!

It was hopeless. Not even the most insignificant portion of the Fourteenth Fleet would get through to defend Ulysses Cluster and Ellen and the kids from the Ramkian onslaught.

Commander Goddard drew up before the table and glanced at the figures. He said nothing. But

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ferguson didn't miss the sharp rush of air into his lungs.

The Admiral scowled. "This list is restricted. You'll treat it as such."

Goddard looked down at his hands. "I—I think Dwyer ought to know the extent of our losses —just in case something happens and he has to take over the fleet."

Ferguson stared severely at him, sensing a certain hostility now on the psytech's part. "Yesterday you thought I had done the right thing. Today—"

"We all make mistakes."

"And now you want to put Dwyer in touch with ComHub and have me yanked out of the picture."

"I didn't say that. It's just that when I think of all the things that have happened—" Goddard paused and began again. "Foltz, commanding the *Nova Hurler,* was my best friend. We even spent a whole month together once, floating on a hull section of the *Wild Comet,* waiting for a rescue detail."

Ferguson gripped his shoulder. "Commander, if we made mistakes, it's too late to do anything about them. If we decided to turn about now it would take six hours just to decelerate, even in a maximum null-I field. On the other hand, if we push on ahead, we'll be half-way through Vortex in another five hours."

"In other words, our quickest way out is straight ahead?"

The Admiral nodded.

"But Commodore Dwyer—"

"Dwyer can't do a damned thing. Look, Goddard. You made a decision. Now you're scared and want out. Well, I'm scared too. But I'm not naive enough to imagine that upsetting the command of the Fourteenth Fleet will make things any easier."

"Do you still think we can get out of here?"

"Yes!" But it was as rank a lie as Ferguson had ever told.

DURING the first dogwatch the *Antares* came under relentless attack once more by spaceborne creatures. This time the things appeared more centipedal than nematodal in form —except for the mouth. The latter were still great vacuous pits ringed by barblike hooks. But each segment of the seemingly infinite bodies had its pair of cilialike legs that pawed absurdly at the nothingness of space, managing nevertheless to get enough purchase for forward propulsion.

Thus writhing and lunging, the horde of centipedes charged the flagship even more furiously than during their first assault.

Ferguson stood inadequately by on the Bridge while Dwyer and his crew fought for their lives. The *Antares* trembled and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rolled and vibrated furiously with the recoil from her batteries. And the whine of vertical gyros as they worked frantically to maintain the ship's attitude was an ear-piercing shriek.

A score of myriapods charged the starboard quarter, supported by an equal number that swept up from below. And the gunners' firing frequency increased to a continuous bulkhead-drumming clatter.

During the seemingly endless engagement, the Admiral tried to raise the Psycom Compartment on intercom. But there had been a circuit failure somewhere along the line and he abandoned the attempt as one of the thrashing centipedes rammed the *Antares* broadside and set her to yawing furiously against her servomotors.

Sometime during the hectic encounter, Ferguson heard the fire control officer inform Dwyer that the S-force accumulators were getting low and that unless the *Antares* got within range of at least a Type G sun, they would not even be able to fight off a weak assault by anything more vicious than normal-size locusts.

And the Admiral thought wistfully of the great concentrations of convertible stellar energy in Ulysses Cluster. All that force would, of course, be available for translation into disaster for the Ramkian armadas. But little good it was doing the Fourteenth EF Fleet now.

Finally the attack ended and Condition Red sirens trailed off into silence as Ferguson dragged himself wearily to Psycom.

"You keeping a running account of our losses?" he asked Commander Goddard.

The other nodded, but with little animation. "Twelve hundred and seventy-one ships now unaccounted for. That leaves us with barely over seven hundred in fighting condition."

Ferguson tried to keep near panic from showing on his face. With careful deployment to strategic positions around the giant suns of Ulysses Cluster, perhaps as few as four hundred ships could throw up an adequate defense. But the Fourteenth Fleet was losing teeth at the rate of better than fifty an hour. In another six hours their three hundred and twenty-nine-ship margin would be gone. Sixteen hours later the entire armada would have been destroyed. And that would be four hours short of the earliest possible time they could expect to emerge from Vortex Nebula's central cavity.

Outside the Communications Compartment, Ferguson encountered a haggard Lieutenant Commander Cook, on his way to the Bridge.

"Complications?" the Admiral inquired.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Can't get top performance out of our propulsionmen," Cook complained. "We're not hitting full speed. But, then again, I suppose every other psydrive officer in the fleet is having the same trouble."

"Then your drivers were aware of that battle action despite their alpha-wave suppressors?"

"No, sir. Not that. When they're haloed in, *no* sensory stuff can get through. It's the snakes."

Ferguson tensed. "Again? In the Psydrive Compartment?"

"Oh, no. It's just that the men are worried like hell. They figure they're sitting ducks, strapped to their chairs like that, if the snakes should come back. It's affecting their beta output."

"In other words, you're getting a seepage of conscious and subconscious alpha stuff into the beta collectors?"

Cook nodded.

"Can you step up your alpha-wave suppressors?"

"Enough to knock the A-activity out of everybody within a two-mile radius. But if I goose them up any higher we'll start building up a field inside the Psydrive Compartment. Our technicians will be sleeping all over the place instead of nursing the collectors and injectors."

FERGUSON hadn't intended to sleep when he reached his cabin a few minutes later. But after he straightened out his locker (restoring the order that "little Fred" had disturbed in his hunt for the dress uniform cap, the Admiral reminded himself with a snicker), he found himself almost toppling over as he leaned wearily against the bulkhead.

The bunk loomed invitingly and, yawning, he started forward. Numb to the drudgery of motion, he next found himself seated on the edge of his bunk, unshod feet sunk luxuriously into the dense pile of the throw rug.

There was a knock at the door and he barely managed an audible "Come in."

In the next moment Ellen stood there smiling softly from under precise braids of blue-tinted hair. He almost lunged up to greet her. But, checking himself, he only smiled back at his wife."

She frowned. "For a moment, Abner, you looked worried."

"I was. I didn't remember going to sleep. And I didn't realize this was just another of our delightful dreams."

"Oh," she said, comprehending. Then, over her shoulder, "Come on in, children. It's all right. Grandpa's waiting for you."

They entered, meekly at first. Dottie and Grace and little Fred, the latter looking so much like his and Ellen's only son. And

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there were their daughter's children too—Jimmy and Frank and Betty.

Almost fifteen, Betty was the eldest. And in her proud, erect stance she was as straight as her pendent pigtails. Just on the brink of maturity, she was beginning to display the charm and grace of her mother before her and of Ellen before the both of them.

When Ferguson rose from the bunk and advanced with his arms outstretched, the children laughed and ringed him in, hands joined in a merry, improvised dance.

The high-pitched laughter brought vibrant life to the cabin's gray walls. Ellen beamed contentedly from the vivid blue depths of her eyes as she activated Dottie's multiprogrammed doll and set it down on the deck.

The doll briskly went through its acrobatic paces and Ellen joined Abner within the ring of grandchildren and they all sang at the top of their lungs.

"Oh, Abner," Ellen said as the kids continued dancing and shouting. "We miss you so."

"It may be a long while before we can be together, honey."

"Trouble?"

"A little." Then he forced the grin back onto his face. "But the trouble hasn't been invented that Gutty Ferguson can't work his way out of."

There was another rap on the door, hard and insistent, and Ellen and the kids faded from reality like leaves falling off a tree.

"Wait! Come back!" he pleaded. "I don't have to answer it, you know."

But the door swung open upon his sudden loneliness and Ferguson found himself face to face with Chief Hewitt.

The CPO scanned the room anxiously, his face wry with bewilderment. "I heard voices."

"Oh, that was just Mrs. Ferguson and our grandchildren." The Admiral laughed at Hewitt's confusion which seemed, like Hewitt himself, so real. It was almost as though the CPO was actually in the cabin talking with him. "If you hadn't knocked so abruptly you could have joined the fun. But you chased them off."

Hewitt was suddenly aloof. But apparently he felt that he had to go through with his purpose. "Admiral, something's happened on the Bridge."

Ferguson stiffened. This, then, wasn't part of the dream. It was too real. Hewitt was being too stubbornly serious. But why couldn't he remember awaking, getting out of the bunk?

"Sorry, Chief," he said, straightening soberly. "I was confused by a vivid dream. What's up?"

"Commodore Dwyer requests

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that you come immediately to the Control Compartment, sir."

"Couldn't he call me on intercom?"

Hewitt drew back, shaking his head. "He said he wouldn't dare let this get out among ship's company. He's closed off the Bridge. The Skipper doesn't want anybody else, except you, to know what's happening."

Ferguson seized his cap and slipped into his shoes. Then he turned for the door.

But Chief Hewitt was pointing at the deck on the far side of the cabin. "What's that?"

Admiral Ferguson looked. Dottie's multiprogrammed doll was there—a blur of motion as it executed a series of handsprings.

V

CHIEF Hewitt drew up before the door to the Bridge, motioned Admiral Ferguson to a halt and knocked. But there was no response.

It occurred to the Admiral that the *Antares* was oddly quiet. The normally subdued *thumps* and *hisses* of the null-inertia generators reverberated boldly against the silence. From beyond the door came no noise whatever —no shouting voices, no clatter of restless solenoids. It was as though the nerve center of the ship were paralyzed.

Hewitt rapped again and, after a moment, the locking mechanism whirred and clicked and the door inched open. Glare from harsh lights stabbed through the widening crack.

Commodore Dwyer, his face grimly chiseled, let them in and led them across the catwalk.

Every officer and noncom was at his Control Compartment post. But they all had their backs to the instruments, their faces fixed in the same stunned expression as the Commodore's.

Lieutenant Commander Cook and Commander Goddard, normally not attached to the Bridge detail, were there too. They stood staring helplessly at each other. Between them, an enlisted man lay crumpled on the deck, sobbing. All eyes were focused fearfully on him.

Perplexed, Ferguson approached the man. Now he could see that the noncom was on his knees, but with his back arched forward until his face rested on the deck between his trembling hands.

The man looked up and saw Ferguson. His eyes were red, his face filmed with despair and fright. He was Yeoman McAdams.

"The Vicars of the Vortex are right!" he blubbered. "Oh, God! We were right!"

Ferguson turned questioningly toward Dwyer. But the Commodore only twisted his cap between

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his hands, regarding McAdams with respectful sympathy.

The latter crawled forward and seized Ferguson by the knee. "We've got to turn back!" he implored. "He wants us to leave His Holy Domain! He'll destroy us all!"

Confused, the Admiral shook McAdams off. "What in hell is this man raving about, Commodore? Get him off your Bridge!"

"Admiral," Dwyer whispered. *"He's out there!"*

"Who's out where?"

"God is out there!"

When nobody laughed or otherwise stirred, Ferguson glanced about the Control Compartment, feeling the tension that gripped the Bridge like the hand of an invisible giant.

"Will you come off that kick!" he exclaimed, suddenly annoyed. "Take McAdams to Sick Bay. Get this ship back in full operation. We've still got the other half of the gap to shoot."

This seemed to jolt Commander Goddard into action. "That's what caused it!" the psytech shouted, pointing an unsteady finger at the Admiral. "He had to go through Vortex! And *against* ComHub's orders! That's why we're in the fix we're in!"

"Shut up, Goddard!" Ferguson snapped.

"I won't!" The other turned excitedly on the Commodore. "ComHub wants you to assume command. Ferguson wouldn't let me tell you that. But I'll crank up Mr. Stewart and you can get it straight from Admiral McFadden. Oh, Lord! Believe me. Ferguson's mad! Take over the fleet and get us out of here!"

Dwyer's eyes widened. "Is that true, Ferguson—ComHub?"

"Oh, don't argue!" McAdams pleaded, arms upraised toward the Commodore. "Just turn us around! That's what He wants! If someone doesn't do it He'll smash us all!"

Commodore Dwyer stepped in front of the Admiral. "In accordance with Article Two Thirty-Four providing for emergency relief of flag officer, I—"

Ferguson cut him short. "You're hysterical—all of you!"

"Wilkins," Dwyer called softly to an enlisted man at the control panel, "douse the lights. Energize the screen. We'll show the Admiral how hysterical we are."

INSTANTLY, darkness leaped up to engulf the Control Compartment. Then the omnidirectional screen, enclosing the suspended Bridge like a cocoon enveloping its larva, glowed with gathering luminescence. In a moment the radiant plumes of Vortex Nebula, embracing their scores of brilliant suns, were ablaze all around Ferguson.

Commodore Dwyer held a hand in front of his eyes and pointed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ferguson fell back against the rail, hardly aware of the voices that rose in profound awe throughout the compartment.

God *was* out there—off the starboard bow!

A great, magnificent, dynamic Figure—all powerful, all fierce, all wrathful over the invasion of his Holy Domain. He dwarfed the *Antares*. Half silhouetted against the fluorescent swirls of a Vortex Nebula, He held His left forearm in front of His chest in a gesture of infinite indignation. His right hand, raised overhead, appeared ready to hurl boundless vengeance at the flagship.

Dumfounded, the Admiral could only stare hypnotically at the screen. He was hardly aware of a frenzied McAdams shouting incoherently and clawing at the rail as he tried to get farther away from the terrifying Image.

The Almighty Form glowed even more fiercely, but Ferguson fought off a compulsion to close his eyes. For a moment it had seemed there was something about the Holy Vision—something—

McAdams screamed, his ragged voice trailing off in the depths below, and Ferguson thus became aware that the yoeman had crashed through the loose section of railing.

There was a remote thump as he hit the undercurve of the omnidirectional screen beneath the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bridge. Several lengths of tubing plummeted down after him.

Instantly the figure of God flicked off the screen, leaving an unobstructed view of the Nebula beyond.

Wilkins turned off the projection circuit and the lights blazed on.

Far below the platform, McAdams lay on his back, one leg twisted oddly beneath him, his lifeless eyes boring upward.

Confounded, Ferguson stared from McAdams' body to the bulkhead where the image of God had reigned in omnipoent magnificence.

Dwyer began again. "In accordance with Article Two Thirty—"

"Stow it!" Ferguson ordered. "And get your ship back in fighting trim before those centipedes return!"

Chief Hewitt hurried over to the Commodore. "*You'd better* take over, sir. He thinks his wife and grandchildren are aboard. I just found him in his cabin playing with a multiprogramed doll."

Ferguson drew back. Ellen! The children! Could it be possible that they, too—

Goddard pushed forward, arms flailing. "In the name of Heaven, Admiral! Let Dwyer have command so he can get us out of here before God destroys us all!"

"If that *was* God out there," Ferguson asked pensively, "Why did He disappear the second McAdams was killed?"

"What do you mean?" Lieutenant Commander Cook demanded.

"I think I'm beginning to see something. But I need a little time to work it out. There are so many pieces." Abruptly there were several taunting, swirling thoughts crowding one another in his mind—worms, Ellen, centipedes, his grandchildren, snakes, a ship filled with water, scorpions, a nude woman racing down a half-lighted passageway.

"You're stalling!" Goddard accused. "You just want to barge on ahead in defiance of God!"

MANY disgruntled voices protested Ferguson's obstinate refusal to be replaced. And, seeing that he would not be able to put them off much longer, he backed to the broken railing. He held a hand up forattention, hiding the other behind his back and tugging at one of the loose metal bars. It came free immediately. But he only tensed. For now he remembered where he had seen that particular image of God before.

"All right, men," Commodore Dwyer said. "Lock him up in his quarters. I've assumed command."

But as several of the noncoms started forward Ferguson

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

brought the bar around in front of him. "First one steps up gets his skull parted down the middle."

They paused uncertainly. And, evidently, Dwyer wasn't quite ready to force the issue under the circumstances.

"I think I may have at least some of the answers," Ferguson disclosed.

The junior officers and noncoms relaxed somewhat, possibly remembering that the man before them, despite his small size, had once been called, and not without justification, Gutty Ferguson.

"On McAdams person," he said, ordering his thoughts, "you'll find a print of an ancient art work—McAdams' holy picture. It's Michelanagelo's *Last Judgment*. The central figure in that painting is God—the very same God we just saw on our screen."

Dwyer swore and started forward.

Ferguson brandished his metal bar. "What I said about staving in skulls applies to yours too, John. Isn't it odd that God should conform, feature for feature, with McAdams' impression of God—an image created by a master painter two thousand years ago?"

Lieutenant Commander Cook pointed at the now-dead screen. "What we saw out there was *real!*" the psydrive engineer insisted. "As real as the space worm that got its hooks into our tubes!"

"Real? I suppose so, as we conceive of reality. But, then, the reality of relativity says nothing can exceed *c-velocity*. *And that* holds true—for *physical* objects acted upon by *physical* forces. Yet, when you use your psydrive to mix in the *metaphysical* ingredient of betta waves, the impossible becomes possible, a few thousand times over."

Cook started to object again, but Dwyer touched his arm and he remained silent.

"Not very many hours ago," the Admiral went on, "a snake attacked one of our spotters. Then the entire ship was crawling with the things. The spotter died. And one of his buddies observed that the man had been 'scared to death of snakes'."

Ferguson paused. "Commander Goddard, I think perhaps you might contribute something to this if you will. In our engagement with what we thought was a Vortexan fleet, we found the *Nova Hurler* filled with water, her crew drowned. You knew her Skipper, Commander Foltz, rather well, didn't you?"

"Served with him on the *Wild Comet* until she dived into a marine world," Goddard confirmed.

"Now this is strictly a guess. But I would say there was some-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thing Foltz feared as much as our first snake-bite victim feared snakes."

Goddard straightened. Water! That's right! In his first psyching after that crash, Foltz showed aquaphobic tendencies. He even moved his whole family to a dry world!"

THOUGHTFUL, puzzled silence claimed the Bridge, until Commodore Dwyer asked. "And that Vortexan fleet—it was somebody's idea of what a Vortexan fleet might look like?"

Ferguson nodded. "Skimpy in detail perhaps, and not showing much of an appreciation of battle tactics. I suppose that might have been the job of another yeoman, or maybe a medical corpsman—certainly not a military strategist.

"The centipedes were more detailed, more prompt to show up too. As well they should have been, since the very first ship to make it through Vortex reported attacks by centipedes. The suggestive precedent had been well laid."

"If your theory is right," Dwyer mused aloud, "then *Hillary* was responsible for our first worm assault! Dawson said Hillary knew everything that had happened during that attack, even though he was unconscious the whole while!"

"Hillary's dreams must have come true as he dreamed them," Ferguson surmised. Then, more anxiously, he added, "Goddard, I think you might throw some light on our nude blonde stowaway too."

"How?" the psytech said. "I wasn't even around for the chase."

"I know you weren't. But you *were* around last night when I walked into the Psycom Compartment to contact ComHub. What was Mr. Stewart doing at the time?"

"Projecting with his pocket tri-D-scope."

"Projecting what?"

"An image of his girl friend. She's—"

"Yes, go ahead. She's a rather attractive, young blonde woman—you were going to say?"

Goddard's mouth hung open. "Why—why from her description, the stowaway might well have been that girl!"

Ferguson shook his head. "Not quite. Only her material projection—from Mr. Stewart's alpha activity. I'm sure of that now, because some of the crew who were in on the chase at first suggested the nude man might have been Stewart. Even I thought so. But Mr. Stewart appeared on the scene only a moment later—just after the nudes had secured themselves in that gear locker."

"Then Stewart himself was projecting—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Let's call it 'recreating'. Yes, he was recreating himself and his girl friend, projecting them into the *Antares*—until the commotion of the chase disturbed his sleep."

There was another moment of silence.

"I'd suggest, Commodore, that you get your Bridge functioning again," Ferguson said. "We're sitting ducks if one of us decides, unwittingly of course, to conjure up some more centipedes."

DWYER shouted out the appropriate orders and the familiar sounds and beats of an active Bridge gradually filled in the silence. In a moment the omnidirectional screen was once more ablaze. But now it fetched only an image of the Nebula ahead and abreast of the flagship. No spaceborne grotesqueries. No wrathful God. Only the radiant plumes that surrounded Vortex Nebula's central cavity and the glittering stars which they only half concealed.

Dwyer went over to the Admiral and the latter released his grip on the metal rod, letting it drop to the deck.

"If you're right," Dwyer noted, "then any random individual can unknowingly project real hallucinations, either aboard ship or out in space, while he's asleep."

Ferguson shrugged. "Perhaps not any random individual, but certainly those with high-level alpha-wave outputs. And not only while asleep, but while awake too."

"But, then, how can we know who's responsible for anything that happens?"

"I'm working on it," Ferguson revealed wearily. "Believe me, I'm working on it."

"It just isn't logical," Commander Cook protested. "Creating. Projecting. Using alpha emanations to conjure up centipedes and snakes and naked women and dinosaurs. It's easier to believe that McAdams' cunning and wrathful God is out there doing all those things."

"You want to know how it works." Ferguson laughed without feeling. "So do I. And all we can do is guess. We do know now, however, that repressed fears and desires are in some way being reflected around us—in solid enough form to be real and capable of exerting all the physical effects expected of them."

He paused and looked hopelessly down at his hands. "How? Why? I don't know. Vortex Nebula, however, is different from any other nebula we've come across. The physical forces here must be unique to have produced what looks like a frozen whirlpool in space. Maybe there are peculiar metaphysical forces

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

too, pervading all this nebular space. For those who favor the Biblical version of Creation, there's the exegetic possibility that Divine alpha emanations were the building blocks of all material things. Perhaps some of the stuff was left over after the Seventh Day. Maybe it's concentrated here, reacting to current alpha emissions. You can take it from there. I'm tired of kicking it around."

Dwyer paced to the rail and back. "If alpha emanations are the cause of our trouble, I don't see what can be done."

As though groping through a dense fog, the Admiral tried to put his finger on another situation in which alpha emission had figured as a disruptive force. Something recent. Something that might, conceivably, provide the key to—

Suddenly he stiffened and singled out Lieutenant Commander Cook with his rigid index finger. "I think perhaps our psydrive engineer might help us out here."

Cook jabbed a thumb against his chest. "Me? I'm over my head. I wouldn't know from nothing about this stuff."

Ferguson stared at him. "What do you do when excessive alpha activity cuts down on a propulsionman's beta output?"

"Step up the alpha-suppressor generators."

"And over how big a radius can you generate total A-wave supression?"

Cook hesitated.

"Two miles you told me, didn't you?" Ferguson reminded.

"Yes, but—good Lord! You can't suppress all alpha activity throughout an entire ship!"

"Why not? The *Antares* will coast along by herself. Our propulsionmen would still be putting out under their halos. Oh, we might slow down a little, since nobody would be around to adjust for a fine physical-metaphysical fuel ratio. But the deceleration wouldn't amount to much."

"But who would we have to fight off the centipedes?"

"There wouldn't be any—not without alpha-wave generation."

Dwyer shook his head vigorously. "You mean you want us to hit the sack for the next twenty-four hours and leave ourselves vulnerable to whatever comes along?"

"That's not only what I mean; it's what I'm ordering." The Admiral wheeled around. "Goddard, get your psycom officers under their halos. I have instructions to pass along to all ships."

Dwyer began a protest, but decided not to complete it under the flag officer's severe stare. For it was quite apparent that the Admiral was, once again, Gutty Ferguson.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Softening, though, Ferguson said, "I think, however, I can prove my point."

He leaned back against the rail, focusing his eyes intently on the vacant space in front of him. And he thought deeply, longingly of Ellen, reminding himself how dear she was, how much he wanted to get through Vortex Nebula so he could be with her once more. He let the yearning thoughts wash through him like a strong emotional current.

Slowly she took shape, like a soft swirl of nothingness coalescing around an idea, separating her own colors and features, smiling as she filled out her tenuous form with an appealing—to him, at least—solidity.

She fussed with the loose end of one of her braids and asked, "How's it coming, Abner?"

"Fine, honey. Real fine now. There's a little work left. But it won't be long before I'll come home—and for good this time, maybe."

TWENTY-THREE hours and thirty minutes later the Fourteenth Earth Federation Fleet emerged from Vortex Nebula's cavity.

An additional six hours passed before preset circuits throttled down the alpha-suppression field generators. The belated arousal had been intentional. It precluded the possibility that the crews would find themselves still in the gap when they were released from the field.

Groggy but exhuberant personnel circulated once more throughout the fleet, hurrying to stations, reactivating dormant Bridges, energizing dead screens, re-establishing intra-fleet communications.

Admiral Ferguson put his psyradarmen to work counting noses. Arrayed behind the flagship in precise echelon were six hundred and fifty-one ships, all stripping for action.

He mounted the *Antares'* Bridge and drew up beside a beaming Commodore Dwyer.

"Well, Abner," the latter exclaimed. "We made it."

"Think we can make it again?"

Dwyer grimaced. "You're kidding of course."

But Ferguson only called over to one of the routers, "Get us the latest psyradar report on those four enemy fleets."

Several seconds passed before the noncom relayed the requested information: "The Ramkians must have picked us up as we came out of Vortex. They've all completed deceleration. Now they're trans-*c*-ing it for home."

Ferguson grinned. "Shoe's on the other foot. They realized we could get to our positions a full day before their estimated time of assault on Ulysses Cluster."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dwyer shouted routine instructions, then told the flag officer, "As soon as we deploy for defense, the Cluster will be impregnable."

"Oh, but John, we're not going to deploy for defense."

The Commodore tensed.

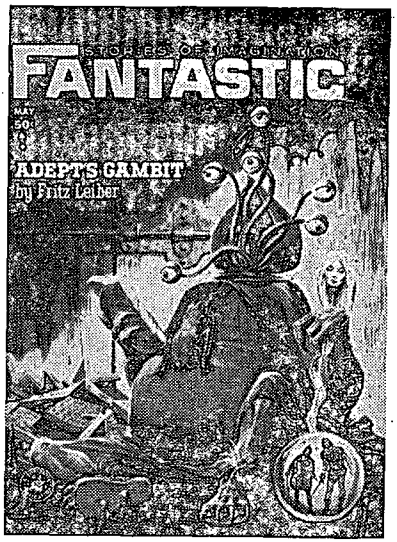
"No," Ferguson went on, mapping his strategy aloud, "we'll wait until they get out of psyradar range around the bulge of Vortex. By that time we'll have at least one other EF fleet closer to Ulysses Cluster than they are.

"Then we'll take aim, crank up our alpha suppressors and shoot the gap in the other direction. That'll catch them with their defenses down. We'll make a clean sweep right on up to their home worlds before they even realize the war's over."

THE END

COMING NEXT MONTH

Once again Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser roam the magic-haunted lands that spread outward—and downward—from Lankhmar. This time, guided and guarded and appropriately bedeviled by Ningauble of the Seven Eyes (the undescribable, who for the first time has been visualized in a superlative cover by Ed Emsh, **r.**), our heroes experience excruciating adventures in a short novel by Fritz Leiber. Its title: **Adept's Gambit.** Do not miss it, complete in the May issue of FANTASTIC.



Also in our next issue—numerous other short stories and features. Get the May FANTASTIC, at newsstands April 23.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

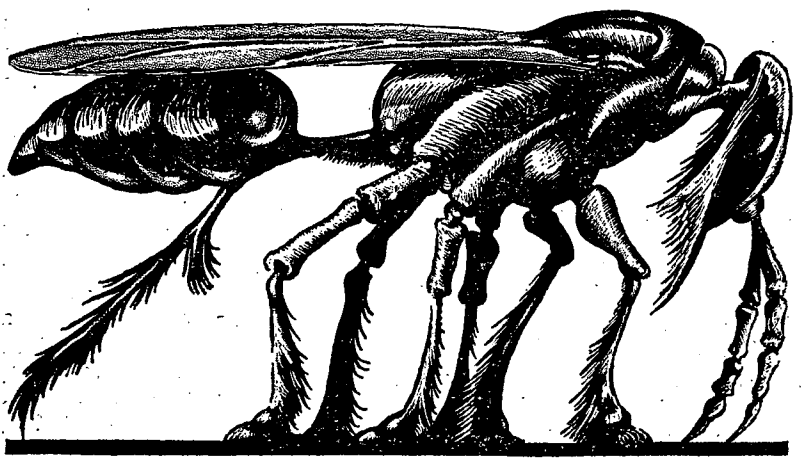
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Gothic, Lovecraftian tale, of ancient evil and ghastly retribution.

The DUNSTABLE HORROR

by

Arthur Pendragon



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A PALEOGRAPHER cannot be thought a madman. To avoid such a charge I have suppressed until my retirement the story which I now add to this book of memoirs. Do not doubt the accuracy of the tale. My memory has not failed me in probing the skin of this earth; it could not betray me now, for I bear like an old unclosed wound the remembrance of that horror in the forest north of Dunstable.

I had come from the British Museum to Dunstable in northern New England during the rainy March of 1920 in order to find and study the long-buried records of the Massaquoit tribe of red Indians. They were an isolate and obscure nation, a sea-marsh people who perished shortly after the foundation of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. My grips and gear were thrown from the creaking passenger train at the Boston & Maine depot on the outskirts of the town. From the platform of the small Victorian building the landscape was singularly depressing. The continual drizzle of Winter's end reduced all to a monochrome grey of muddy flats and dripping scrub-topped hills. I would have been stranded were it not for the New England type lounging with the stationmaster in the telegraph office. As I entered the warmth of the waiting room he casually surveyed my dripping waterproof and the cut of my clothes, remarking drily, "Looks like the tourist season has begun."

I took an instant dislike to the man which went beyond the sneer in his remark. However, since his was the only team outside I forced myself to be polite, to suffer his arrogance for the sake of a ride to town and a warm billet. After a few minutes of conversation he rose to his feet and grudgingly offered to drive me into Dunstable if I would help him load the wagon.

We wrestled several boxes of parts for his lumber mill, apparently the only industry in this area of rocky farms, into the back of the wagon, and added my gear. As the team plodded through the cold mist I found him more talkative than the traditionally taciturn New Englander. He commented, in a fragmentary fashion, on his mill, his position of authority in the town, and his affluence. From the very beginning his family, the Varnums, had inhabited the town, and he was the culmination of the line. Although unmarried at forty, he had decided to take a wife when time allowed in order to perpetuate the Varnum house.

THE wagon swung onto a paved and wider thoroughfare posted as the Black North Road. Varnum finished his monologue and eyed me suspiciously, asking

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

why I had come all the way up the coast to Dunstable. I decided to put an end to his egoistic spouting by exploiting the awe for learning shared by the middle classes, and so replied, "I am Thomas Grail of the British Museum, and I have come to find Pauquatoag." To my utter astonishment he recognized the name of the great sorcerer of the Massaqcoits, the evil Merlin of the New England tribes.

Varnum saw the surprise on my face. "Oh, yes. The family had a certain—ah—contact with Pauquatoag when they first landed." He smiled darkly and alluded to several diaries he had inherited with his father's estate. I would not learn the peculiar nature of that contact, and its terrible result, until later.

We rolled onto the covered bridge over the Penaubsket River. On the far bank lay Dunstable, its lights wanly glowing against the foggy dusk. "I suppose this means you'll be going up north into the forest," Varnum said. "You'll have a hard time getting anyone to go with you." I told him that I could offer good wages, and that the work would not be difficult, merely a bit of digging. "You've got three things working against you," he replied. "Number one—the frost is coming out of the ground and the farmers 'll be putting in the seed pretty soon. Number two—the ice broke on the Penaubsket and the Kennebago last week, so the mill will be running at top speed in a few days." He cracked the reins as we left the bridge for the main road. "And number three—everyone's been sort of reluctant to go farther north than the logging camps since the animals came floating down river."

He pointed out a mill pond at the side of a small dam. The oily water circled and foamed in endless eddies. "That pond has been almost full of dead animals two or three times since the thaw began. Came floating downstream from beyond the last logging camp. Squirrels, foxes, even a deer or two. Never saw anything like it."

I asked how they had died. "As far as we could tell, by drowning. As if something had driven them into the river. When the snow melts in the uplands the current gets vicious. You'll see it at its worst in about a week. Ever since then, nobody has gone beyond the camps. Superstitious peasants." He laughed wryly. "And some of my men who've been past the camps laying out cutting stakes even say they saw a glow in the forest after dark, near the marshes. I just couldn't convince them that they had seen an ordinary will o' the wisp."

I RECOGNIZED the popular name for *ignis fatuus*, a light seen at night moving across bogs,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thought to be caused by the slow oxidation of gases from rotting vegetation. "But surely," I said, "they must see that sort of thing often around here, judging from the number of fens I passed on the train."

Varnum snorted. "They all said this light was different—steady, not flickering, and moving from the marshes into the forest. They're just trying to get out of camp duty. Lazy oxes. I have to keep after them all the time."

We reined up before the Dunstable Inn, which looked as though it had received its last repair in colonial times. "Well, that's what you're up against, Mr. Grail-of-the-British-Museum." Varnum dropped my bags into the muddy street. "If you're going to come all this way to dig up a three-hundred year old Indian, you've got to expect little problems like this. If you ask me, you grave-robbers are all a little bit off." He laughed and reined on the team, spattering me with mud as the wagon was enveloped in the steady drizzle. Chilled and disgusted, I collected my gear and entered the inn.

* * *

Varnum was correct in his prediction about the difficulty of obtaining guide service. The following morning, after a restive night in a battered four-poster, I began to make the rounds. At the feed and genereal store I was met with the reticence and suspicion of the highland New Englanders. The booted farmers and hands fell silent when I entered, awed by my accent. When I told them of my purpose they shifted their bodies uneasily. I promised a good week's wages, and in some I could see raging the battle between the desire for money and some strange dread. But they all hung back, muttering lame excuses, saying "You're sure to get someone at the mill."

The millpond was already filling with rafts of logs ridden downstream by the pikemen. The rasp of a giant saw somewhere in the bowels of the mill trembled across the damp air. At the hiring office I was informed that the mill was laying on a second shift that night, and that no one would be available for a week's leave. Furthermore, the foreman doubted that I would be able to get a single townsman to accompany me because the news of the dead animals and the light in the forest had made the residents fearful of traveling beyond the logging camps on the two rivers.

When I left the office a small crowd of workers had gathered on the bank of a short canal which ran from the millpond into large dark orifices beneath the brick building, in which the rushing water turned underground wheels to power the saw. A line

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of wooden floats connected by a heavy chain closed the mouth of the canal against any influx of debris which might jam the wheels. Bobbing against this guardline were the bodies of numerous small animals. I walked into the knots of loitering millhands for a closer look at the animals—grey squirrels, chipmunks, and several large hares, forest dwellers which generally avoid the water. The squirrel which I examined bore no marks of disease or violence; it had apparently drowned, since the chest cavity was heavy with water. I remember that Varnum had spoken of similar occurences during the past weeks, and a curious fear touched me for an instant. Had these animals actually sought out a water death, like the lemmings which I had seen literally choking the Trondheim Fjord in Norway the previous year? Or had something driven them before it, something so repugnant to even their coarse animal mentality that they preferred the water they abhorred to its presence?

I returned to the inn that afternoon puzzled both by the sight of the animals at the mill and by the fear of the townspeople at the mere mention of going north beyond the lumber camps. If necessary, I could go it alone—the previous autumn I had sighted from the air what I believed to be the remains of the chief Massaquoit campsite. But the location was thirty-five miles north of Dunstable, through an alien forest, and the going would not be easy.

I HAD not long been at the inn when a servant called with the message that Mr. Varnum would be pleased to entertain me at dinner that evening. Any company would have been preferable to the loneliness of the town after dark, so I accompanied the man in a wagon to the Varnum house, mystified at the sudden largesse of a person who seemed to resent my presence as one whom he could not awe with his authority.

My host met me at the door of his manse-like stone house. As he conducted me to his drawing room he smiled knowingly. "I hear you weren't too successful at the feed store and mill today."

"No," I said, "all the men I asked seemed too busy for the project. Or perhaps they were a bit afraid at the prospect of going beyond the camps."

"Craven, superstitious bumpkins, the lot of them! Since those animals began showing up at the mill, they've been acting like old women." Varnum dismissed the subject with a contemptuous wave of the hand. He poured me what he called "a hearty old colonial drink," aptly named *The Dog's Nose*: a bumper of warm ale to which he added a jigger of gin. The taste was wretched, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I stomached it in deference to his attempt at hospitality.

"By the way—you saw the millpond today?" he asked.

"Yes, the animals have begun to appear again," I said. "Forest creatures, which seldom go near the water. Puzzling, and a bit eerie."

"Why Mr. Grail-of-the-British-Museum," said Varnum in mock surprise, "are you becoming a little unsure about the trip to find your sorcerer? Don't tell me that a few waterlogged animals are giving a man of science cold feet!"

"My dear Varnum," I replied, considerably nettled, "let me assure you that I have seen things far more eerie than a few squirrels bobbing in a millpond. Whatever the phenomenon, sir, it is all grist for the mill of science, and we will find it out."

Varnum grunted and motioned me to the dining room where dinner was laid out by his decrepit house-keeper. The menu was a boiled New England dinner, more bland than the tasteless food which gluts Britannia. While eating I remarked on the gallery of portraits, mostly in American Primitive style, which covered the walls of the room. Varnum bore a striking resemblance to the first portrait, although the family features appeared in all of them—small, heavily lidded eyes, insipidity of the brow, large nose, and the surprise of a markedly narrow and thin-lipped mouth set between heavy and sensual jowls.

"You've noticed the resemblance between Prester and myself," Varnum said, pausing in ravenous devoural of the steaming food. He shook his fork at the portrait. "A real rake—for one of the old guard he was a high-stepper. You should read his diaries. By Nick, I'll show them to you, after supper." He flicked a fragment of cabbage off his vest. "The folks used to tell me that I was the reincarnation of Prester. But it must go only skin deep—I have no time for women. Too much to be done—the mill, the town council, and now this damned business beyond the camps to be settled."

I was amazed at his lack of interest in the subject of the ladies, myself having been without an *amour* since the pretty but petulant botanist at Harvard who had been a most charming companion until I became completely unnerved by the continual presence of beef-eating plants in her flat. Varnum's *sang froid,* I decided, was simply another aspect of the consuming ambition which drove the man to his displays of arrogance.

WE rose from the wreckage of the dinner and re-entered the drawing room for cigars and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a look at the diaries of Prester Varnum. My host excused himself to go and fetch them, indicating the liquor cabinet to me before he left. I surveyed the dismal array of American firewater, fit for no civilized gullet, my spirit sagging, until I saw a tenth of Cointreau forgotten in the corner. The sugary crystals on the bottle's neck formed an unbroken seal—Varnum was obviously not an enthusiast of the delightful liqueur. I wrenched the cap off and poured myself a finger as he returned with several calf-bound octavos.

Varnum at first persisted in showing me the sections chronicalling the romantic peccadilloes of his ancestor. These were of little interest, merely egomaniacal neighings of no great literary or historical merit. Far more to my use was the matter concerning the extinction of the Massaquoit tribe, of whose annihilation Prester was the root cause. The cramped and miniscule script coldbloodedly narrated the tragedy of this race.

In the spring of 1657 Prester Varnum, accompanied by his Mohegan guide, Mamtunc, had passed from the hamlet of Dunstable Northward along the Penaubsket seeking the extent of the pine resources in that area. During the journey they had surprised a woman of the Massaquoits. Putting aside his stern Calvinism for the nonce, Prester had enjoyed her despite Mamtunc's warning about reprisals against Dunstable by her tribe. The woman later escaped and fled in shame back to her people.

Not long after, Prester had fallen ill with a fever in the forest, and was brought back to the settlement in a *travois* by the Mohegan. When they arrived the town was in the grip of the second outbreak of plague since its foundation nine years before. Worse, a friendly savage had informed the inhabitants that because a colonist had molested a wife of Pauquatoag, the Massaquoit *shaman*, the tribe was preparing for war.

During that black summer Dunstable buried its dead and readied itself for the Massaquoit onslaught. Smallpox claimed over a third of the villagers, including Mamtunc. But Prester Varnum recovered and was strong again by the time it was discovered that the Massaquoits had perished to a man, infected by the unknown white through the wife of Pauquatoag. The courier who brought the news also spoke of the curse which the sorcerer had levied upon the defiler of his wife—that the line of descent which produced such a man would end most horribly and in the same manner as the extinction of the Massaquoits. However, Prester discounted this as superstition and, indeed, came to a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

peaceful death in his sleep at 72, leaving many children to mourn him both in Dunstable and the nearby Indian camps.

I closed the diaries of Prester Varnum and exhaled slowly. The narration of the needless extinction of the Massaquoits had depressed me considerably. But the flare of a match as my host lit his cold cigar, and then mine, brought me back among the living.

Varnum cleared his throat importantly. He had become increasingly impatient as I lost myself in the pages of his ancestor.

"You've probably been wondering all evening why I invited you," he said. "This—this phenomenon as you call it is beginning to be troublesome to me. There are some fine stands of pine beyond the last camp, between the Penaubsket and the marshes. I'll have that lumber at any price."

"If you can get your crews to go into the area," I said. "They seem to have little stomach for it."

VARNUM took a deep draught of bourbon. "Exactly. As long as these animals that keep floating downriver are unexplained, my boys'll be jumpier than a bull at fly time about getting into that timber. We know the animals drowned. The vet examined a few, and found noth-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing from disease, no marks or broken skin, no singed fur from a brush fire—nothing except water in the lungs. The question is, why in Hell did they jump into the Penaubsket in the first place?"

"Perhaps they were *driven*," I hazarded.

"By what?"

"The Headless Horseman," I answered, sipping my Cointreau.

Varnum failed to detect the note of humor in my voice. "You're not superstitious too, are you?"

"It was merely a drollery," I assured him.

"Oh. Well, whatever the reason my friend, I won't have my men harassed by a will of the wisp and a few sopping animals. I'm going along with you. When do you leave?"

I was inwardly seething at being *told* that I would be accompanied, but allowed little sign of this emotion to betray itself on my face. It would be, at least, better than going it alone. "I plan to leave day after tomorrow," I replied. "Tomorrow I'll hire the horses at the livery stable."

"Good, I'll see you then," said Varnum, rising from his seat. Apparently the evening was over, although it was only ten o'clock.

At the door there were no amenities, simply a curt "Good night" by Varnum, as though dismissing an inferior. As I rode in the wagon back to the inn I found myself boiling over my host's bad manners. For the sake of a guide to my project site I would suffer the man's company, although it probably would not be the most pleasant two weeks I would spend at a site. I consoled myself by fondling the tenth of Cointreau which I had surreptitiously tucked into the inside pocket of my black greatcoat upon leaving. "Why waste it on a boor with no palate," I thought, and laughed aloud. The first frogs answered from the marshes where the faint blue will o' the wisp hung over last winter's cattails like an augury.

BY the time of our meeting two days later I had hired four horses, two as mounts and two for portage. It had taken me almost a full day to prepare the gear we would transport to the burial site of the Massaquoits—the probing bars, shovels, picks, brooms, and padded hardwood boxes which would protect whatever fragile birchbark rolls had survived. This baggage, plus rations, camping equipment, firearms, and a copy of Pope's *Essay on Man*, composed the burdens of our two pack horses.

We left Dunstable as the sun rose on a clear day, a rarity in the New England spring. When I gave Varnum my compass readings and landmark notes on the site, he found that we would be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

able to use the most northerly of the logging camps as a jumping-off point for the burial ground. Thus, we were able to keep to logging roads and tracks for a good part of the trek.

On entering the great New England forest I experienced an almost religious awe which was never duplicated in any other jungle, veldt, canebrake, or tundra of this earth. A brooding stillness invested all. The light filtered greenly through the solemn pines and hemlocks so that even the air we breathed seemed the color of the vegetation which pressed in around us. The sound of hooves was muffled by the thick carpet of dry reddish needles, the organic sediment of the centuries. When a bird called, the echo amid the quiet was startling—one felt that a blasphemer had defiled a dark and sacred place. And the small towns and hamlets of the forest seemed to share my awe, huddled as they were along the seamarshes as if they preferred the known dangers of the sullen North Atlantic to the silent encroachments of the dark woods; their names stark, staunch, reflecting the cold indefatigability of the Yankee settlers—Sabbathday, Icepond, Landsen Depot, Wind Flume, and Bell Shoals.

Varnum was immune to such feelings, riding before me with his head sunk into a great woolen muffler, lost in thoughts of cutting schedules, board feet, and distances along the Penaubsket to the mill at Dunstable. He also seemed unmoved by the unshakeably ominous foreboding which had beset me since leaving the town. I found my mind turning back inexorably to the sight of the animals revolving lifelessly in the black eddies of the millpond, and to the thought of the blue *nimbus,* so much like the will o' the wisp, but feared by the lumbermen more than the Penaubsket at flood. I tried to concentrate on the work which lay ahead—finding the site, the excavations, the discovery, identification, and packing of the Massaquoit pictographs. But there in the greenish light and stillness north of Dunstable the emotion was irrepressible.

ON the morning of the third day, after a night's halt at the most northerly of the logging camps, we arrived at the site. The reader may wonder at the ease with which we located the tribal ground of the Massaquoits. But in addition to compass fixes and landmark notes I had another factor working for me—the almost eternal sterility of land used for many years as a camping place. Because of constant foot traffic, cooking and smelting fires, and the disposal of alkaline solutions used in primitive tan-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ning, the land is so leached and eroded that it can support only the hardiest of weeds.

I recognized the site immediately upon breaking out of the scrub pine into the roughly circular fifteen acre clearing. There were no *middens*, or refuse mounds, for these had long ago vanished under the winds of the summer hurricane and incursions of scavenger animals. There were, however, rows of blackish depressions in the earth which once held the lodge-poles supporting the Massaquoit dwellings. Except for these the ground was clean of any trace of a civilization; if anything were to be found here, it would be an occasional discarded arrowhead, or shard of pottery, or other artifact of the tribe. The birchbark picture records would be in the burial ground, distributed among the graves of the chiefs and first warriors. Unlike many of their neighbors, the tribe of Pauquatoag cremated their dead and interred the remains; the corpse was not lashed to a scaffold or tree limb to tatter in the wind.

We made camp at the center of the clearing, pitching the two one-man tents about twenty yards apart on either side of the fire. I was eager to find the burial ground, and Varnum wished to ride through the area both to inspect the stands of timber and to search for any trace of the mystery which had been worrying his men. Accordingly, we agreed to meet back at camp before sundown.

Through the long afternoon I made shallow preliminary excavations at the burial ground, about a mile north-west of our camp. It was not long before I found the first of the pictographs, interred with the remains of one who had been a major warrior. The primitive stick figures might have come from the hand of a child, so simple were they, carefully drawn in berry dyes on sheets of birchbark packed in a matrix of alkaline ash which preserved them from fungus and bacteria through the centuries. But while the analytical faculties of my mind feasted on the details of the records, my emotions were disturbed with the same sense of foreboding which had dogged me on the passage from Dunstable. Perhaps it was the starkness of the area, or the solemnity of walking in the footpaths of a vanished race. Whatever the cause, I was relieved to find Varnum waiting at the camp on my return.

He had lit the campfire although it was not yet sundown, and glanced up as he gingerly inserted a dry log into the blaze.

"Did you find your Indian comic books?" he asked.

"Yes—the records are buried with the remains, just as I thought they would be. I took

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

only a sampling today, but the pictographs seem remarkably well preserved. But, a rather curious thing—I didn't see the grave of Pauquatoag, although that should be the most clearly indicated of them all, with at least a rock cairn atop it."

Varnum looked into the fire with an expression of absolute disinterest.

"Perhaps the old faker was assumed into the Indian heaven. He was supposed to be a witch doctor or something, wasn't he?"

"Well, perhaps I overlooked the grave. But it should be large and easy to find, what with the immense number of trappings they buried their *shaman* with." I poured myself a cup of coffee. "How did your day go? Any sign of—anything?"

Varnum laughed shortly. "Not a thing. Those old women who call themselves lumbermen are afraid of a will o' the wisp, just as I said. No tracks, nothing unusual for miles around. A moving blue light—nonsense!"

"But what of the animals in the millpond?" I asked.

"How should I know. Maybe they take some sort of a fit that makes them leap into the water. It could be anything like that." He was complete in his confidence, but his self-assuredness did not relieve me of that foreboding which was now almost a part of my mind.

WE finished supper shortly after total darkness enveloped the forest. Varnum rose in the circle of firelight, stretched, and rubbed his unshaven jowls.

"Are you going digging tomorrow?" he asked.

"Yes, I'll try to find the grave of Pauquatoag. And you?"

"I'll ride north-west about eight miles. There's a stand of pine that looks good from here." He scratched his sides and, without a further word, entered his tent and drew down the doorflap.

Since the night chill had come up, I banked the fire and retired to my tent, bringing the few birch rolls with me. By the light of the kerosene lantern I sat for an hour deciphering those of the records which were easily legible. Although fragmentary, they spoke of the last days of the tribe during the smallpox epidemic, which they believed was a curse levied upon them because of the illicit congress between Pauquatoag's wife and the colonist. One roll mentioned that at the first sign of smallpox tokens on her body the woman was slaughtered most cruelly and her carcass literaly thrown to the dogs. But this gesture of appeasement to the gods was ineffectual—each succeeding roll was covered with drawnings of dismembered bodies, the Massaquoit method of depicting death from disease. The living perished even as they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

keened the dirges for the dead in their birch lodges.

When I found myself drowsing over the records I snuffed the lantern, bedded down, and was immediately asleep. But it was not long after midnight when I suddenly awoke to the feel of Varnum shaking me. In the glare of his battery lantern I could see his rifle glinting in his hand.

"Get up," he said. "Some thing's wrong outside."

I drew on my leggings and seized my own rifle. In the darkness of the campsite the ashes of the banked fire glowed hotly.

"To the northeast," Varnum whispered. "Animal noises."

I listened carefully, straining to hear over the roiling of the Penaubsket, which had risen during the night. When I had retired the only sounds were the metrical chirruping of the crickets and the eerie call of a night-roving whippoorwill. I could still hear only these sounds, and the river. I looked at Varnum and shrugged.

"Wait till the wind swings around," he said.

The breeze, which had been at our backs, began to turn with excruciating slowness until it cooled our faces as we stared off into the black wood. As its direction shifted, the wind brought with it at first the merest suspicion of a sound on the very edge of audibility, which gradually burgeoned into a high murmur. With a thrill of fear I recognized the sound as a frantic chorus of animal voices.

"Coming this way," Varnum said. He snapped off the safety on his rifle.

"What's driving them?" I I asked.

"I don't know—never saw anything like this."

Even as he spoke the murmur became a steady wail of individual yipping ululations. From the edge of the camp came the noise of bodies thudding through the thickets of scrub pine. We dropped to our knees by the tents, rifles at the ready, just as a wave of small dark shapes burst into the lantern-lit clearing filling the night with a mad chattering as they swept over the ground. Some of the larger animals could not check their momentum and plunged through the fire, sending a plume of sparks through the tops of the pines and hemlocks. Missing their grips on the dark branches above, squirrels dropped into the light, then scurried in confusion back into the total darkness. Under the press of bodies the two tents collapsed. Loose gear was thrown about the camp and into the thickets on the edge of the clear ground. All at once a full-grown buck exploded into the clearing and made for us blindly, his great rack of antlers lowered. We fired simultaneously,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the shock of the slugs lifted the spray from his sides as he leapt high in the air, then thudded dead to the earth. All the animals headed unerringly for the Penaubsket, as if they were being herded to their destruction. Behind us we heard splashings as the first of the wave skittered down the steep banks into the flood. But the noise did not subside—a horrible collective moan, made in the extremities of terror.

THEN, as quickly as it had begun, the stampede ended. The night was still again, save for the river, the crickets, and the lone whipporwill. We waited with out a word for fifteen minutes, each on one knee, safeties still off and torches out, peering into the forest. Although the air was chill Varnum mopped his brow.

"Did you see anything?" I asked.

"I—I don't know." Varnum rose hesitantly and began building up the fire. "For a time I thought I saw something—something blue, like a glow, through the trees. But it was so faint I'm not sure."

I was baffled. "What could have caused such a flight? There was no fire, no sound except that of the animals. Yet they were running for their lives."

In the glow of the fire Varnum's face was haggard.

"Do you really think I look like Prester?" he asked.

"Why—yes. The resemblance is a bit startling. Why do you ask?" There was a macabre oddity about his question in these circumstances.

"Never mind—just a thought." He laughed, but it was a dry, whickering sound, rooted not in humor but in fear.

For the remainder of the night we sat by the fire, dozing on our rifles, never daring to fall asleep completely. The first timorous glow of dawn through the ground mist rising from the marshes was a welcome sight. With the coming of day we repegged our tents and retired for a few hours rest.

By nine o'clock the fat sun had dispelled the forest chill. Varnum approached me as I tightened the harness about the pack horse in preparation for the short trek to the burial ground.

"Say, how much longer do you want to stay here?" His manner lacked the arrogance which had grated on me at other times. As he spoke, his tone was almost supplicating.

"After last night, I'm not sure," I replied. I had planned to stay at least a week, but now it seems there is something wrong in this forest. The warden should be notified about the animals."

"But how much longer?" he asked.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"If I can find the grave of Pauquatoag today, we can leave in three days at the very latest."

"Then I'll give you a hand," Varnum said. Apparently his desire to see the timber resources in the area had vanished.

WE rode to the burial ground, each sunk in his own thoughts. Varnum was undoubtedly troubled by the wave of ani-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mals which had come to a watery end in the Penaubsket. As for myself, I was frankly puzzled and not a little disturbed. As far as I knew, there was nothing in the natural order that could cause such a phenomenon except fire—and in the fungused, dripping underbrush that night there had been no fire, save for the eerie but harmless glows over the fens adjoining the river. Disease organisms could cause such madness, but I knew of none that affected such a large number of species simultaneously. Had I been a zoologist, perhaps I would have exulted over the chance of discovering new information about the behavior of forest dwellers. As a student of ancient records, versed only incidentally in animal lore, I could only stand in awe and bewilderment.

All that second day we worked at the burial ground. I had abandoned my plan of collecting as many of the subsidiary rolls as possible, and instead aimed at locating the grave of Pauquatoag immediately. Varnum and I hammered our iron sounding bars into the flinty soil innumerable times, locating the individual graves by the softness of their contents as contrasted to the density of the surrounding soil. As we probed I noticed that Varnum's hand trembled as he guided the bar. He swallowed often, and although the day was cool his face and neck were covered with a web of perspiration. The man had a look of doom about him.

It was late afternoon when our probes found an area of soft soil which, because of its size, could only be the grave of an important member of the tribe. As we dug through the layers of decaying pine needles and sterile earth, my conviction grew that this was indeed the grave of Pauquatoag. We removed cache after cache of *wampumpeag*, the cowrie shell money which paid the spirit's passage to the next world. Our trowels and shovels uncovered fire-blackened cooking utensils, fine weapons, and the remains of what had been rich ceremonial vestments three hundred years before. But the richest treasure would be the records which chronicled the life of the *shaman*, his feats, his genealogy, and his death.

With each succeeding foot that we penetrated into the grave Varnum's tension grew, and was transmitted in part to me. He did not speak, but I could read his anxiety in his jerky motions as he wielded the shovel and in the serious cast of his features. Although I had opened many graves in my researches, I resonated with his emotion. A strange unreasoning pall of fear settled over the burial ground.

We struck the level of ashes in which would be buried the picto-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

graphs. The body, or bones, would be just below this. Gently, with a small whisk broom and an old lobster pick, I separated the fragile rolls from their protective crust of ash and handed them to Varnum as he knelt on the lip of the grave. He dropped one and apologized for his clumsiness, saying that he was not himself. And I, kneeling in the mold above the resting place of the greatest of the northaestern tribal sorcerers, was not completely composed myself.

When the rolls were cleaned and packed in their padded boxes I walked to where Varnum was sitting like a dumb man.

"Shall we have a look?"

HE nodded and rose with an air of resignation. We re-entered the excavation and with trowels cut into the hardened ash, which the Massaquoits believed would preserve the skeleton for eternity, for any injury to the remains would affect the spirit in the next world. We scraped and sifted through at least a half-yard of the grey ash. Then Varnum's trowel rang against a granite ledge.

"Oh God," he whispered to himself, "the bottom."

I continued digging in my corner of the excavation, trying to uncover some part of the remains. But not a fragment of bone was at the bottom.

"Nothing," I said quietly. We stared at each other. The layer of ash had been unbroken, the funereal gifts in perfect arrangement, the grave undisturbed for three centuries—and yet, no remains.

Beads of perspiration broke out on Varnum's brow. The forest at dusk, which had been tranquil, became ominous because of our discovery.

"But bodies just can't vanish, can they?" asked Varnum, almost pleading.

"There is always a trace," I said. "Sometimes, if the soil is abnormally acid and water continually leaches down, the bones, the clothing, even metal objects will disintegrate. But the hair always remains. Yards of it, in the case of a woman, since it continues growing for a time after death."

"There's no water seepage here," Varnum said. "The grave bottoms on a granite shelf, and there's no hair at all. Almost as though there never were a body."

"Ridiculous—these Indians did not make mock graves. This one is genuine, but, inexplicably, something has happened to the remains. I've never encountered such a thing before."

We rose in the ashen light. "We've done all we can here," I said. "During the next two days I'll clean the rolls further and pack them in preservative for the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trip back. Then we'll fill the grave and leave Pauquatoag for the paleontologists. We must get back to Dunstable and notify the authorities about that stampede last night."

Varnum helped me to strap the record containers securely to the back of the pack horse. We rode back to the tents, arriving a few minutes before universal darkness settled over the wood. Against the possibility of another stampede we decided to stand watches through the remainder of the nights we would be on the camping ground.

During the next two days I was continually busy preparing the records for transport back to Dunstable and, eventually, the British Museum. Every particle of ash which might abrade the delicately figured surface of each roll had to be teased away. A coating of paraffin was applied to protect the dry birchbark from the atmosphere. This would suffice until a more durable preservative could be used.

Despite my preoccupation with the rolls, I could not overlook a progressive deterioration in Varnum's morale. On the evening of our discovery at the grave he had suffered nightmares all through his sleep. Sitting on watch, I could hear him moaning and speaking unintelligibly to some unknown adversary. When he came on watch he was obviously unrested and bore a harried expression about his eyes which only first light would dispel.

On the second evening his discomfort was worse. I decided to wake him, since the sounds which issued from his throat were scarcely human.

"It's—it's the same as last night," he gasped, blinking in the light from my lantern. "I can see myself asleep in the tent, and you sitting on watch—but there's something else there beyond the clearing, something which is slowly moving in toward the tents. And you can't see it, but it's there, coming for—for me!"

The man was almost hysterical. In view of his condition I decided to stand his watch for him, and so administered a sedative from the medical kit which I hoped would at least quiet the terrible sounds and cries he had been making. When he fell back to sleep I took a turn around the fringe of the clearing, then returned to my seat by the fire.

FOR a time, wrapped in my blanket, I contemplated to try at deciphering the records of Pauquatoag, but the light from the embers was feeble. In retrospect I doubt that I could have long concentrated on the pictographs, given the situation. My mind was occupied with thoughts of the unnatural fear which hung over

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dunstable and this forest—the unspoken fear of the townsmen at the mere mention of penetrating north of the lumbering camps; the bizarre sight of animal bodies circling aimlessly in the eddies of the millpond; the insane, chattering flight of the animal horde through the forest and into the Penaubsket. And now, our failure to find a trace of the *shaman* in his virgin, untouched grave.

With an effort of will I forced my mind away from these thoughts since there in the ruddy glow of the dying fire I found myself becoming mortally afraid. I was a grown man, only a few years away from the slaughter of Belleau Wood. I had been afraid there yet had never betrayed the emotion since I was among my fellows. With the romanticism of a nobler age we thought we were all marked for death, and so resigned ourselves. But there in that black forest where each breath brought the taste of mold, there was no flashing cannonade or shrapnel warbling into trenches or bullets thudding through the olive drill of uniforms—only the steady dripping of the leaves, the smell of unknown centuries of decay and dissolution, and the unbearable silence. Although I trust no human group above the size of a British infantry platoon, that night I longed for the babble of a crowd.

To compose myself I reached inside my pack and drew out the dog-eared copy of the works of Alexander Pope, my beloved Pope, whose graceful verse had solaced me on many such a watch. I hunched in my blanket against the fire, rifle at my knee, and almost pushed the sense of foreboding from my mind. It was two hours before dawn, and I had just finished "Windsor Forest", when the pain began.

Without warning I was in the extremities of agony. Every joint, nerve, and organ writhed under a pain so intense it was exquisite. I bit my tongue and tasted blood as the volume slipped from my fingers. Entirely paralyzed I began to fall forward, afire in a frenzy of pain and fear but unable to scream and hardly to breathe. The brief interval of my fall seemed a day; although my mind was numbed a small, cold faculty dispassionately and at great speed reviewed the possible causes of my agony —a cerebral hemorrhage? An injury to the spinal cord, grievously damaging the major nerve bundles? A crushing blow to the cerebellum? With damp moss against my cheek I lay facing Varnum's tent across the fire, almost mad with the spasms which tettered up and down my limbs. "My God," I thought, "is this the end?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AND then, on the periphery of my vision, sliding in across the fringe of the clearing, soundlessly, inexorably, came the damned Thing. A cold blue glow, a lurid phosphorescence which gave no warmth to the night which enveloped it. It crossed the open space, my pain increasing with its approach. But no merciful unconsciousness came. The *nimbus* passed through the fire while not an ember stirred, not a spark rode the column of warm air. Ignoring me, it made for Varnum's tent, from which came the sounds of a sleeper in the throes of a horrid dream, the mumbled cries of a mind battling a hideous foe.

As I listened, laying mute like a felled animal, the cries hanged in timbre and Varnum was awake. The glow hovered over, then invested the entire tent, its unearthly light playing over the canvas and ropes like St. Elmo's Fire in the rigging of a ship. The door flap burst open and Varnum bolted out, naked to the waist, clawing his flesh and the air as the radiance settled around him. On his chest and arms the muscle bundles were twitching and cramping spasmodically. From his frantic screams I knew he shared the agony in which I lay. Frenziedly he ran through the fire, setting his leggings ablaze in a vain attempt to outrun his tormentor.

"Grail, for the love of God, help me!" he cried. He wore the glow like a cloak; his limbs pulsated with an unholy light and thrashed about like those of a madman.

With a sudden shock that rose even above my numbing pain I realized that Varnum was headed toward the river. He passed out of my field of vision as his agonized screams were joined by the crackling of underbrush. I tried to move my arms, to grasp my rifle, to seize a brand from the fire—anything to relieve my terror through action. But I was paralyzed as surely as if my spinal cord were severed. I could only lie sobbing as the wails grew more distant, finally vanishing under the roar of the flooding Penaubsket. With the knowledge that Varnum now shared the fate of the stampeding animals, blessed unconsciousness came.

* * *

I revived shortly before dawn, groggy at first, then wide awake. The paralysis and pain had left me; now I experienced a wild desire to run, to leave the damned campsite. I loped to the brush near the river and lay amid the wet leaves expecting the reappearance of the awful Thing at any moment. Thoughts of Prester Varnum, the curse of Pauquatoag on the Varnum house, and the empty grave seethed through my mind, dominated by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the image of that inexorable blue *nimbus* moving across the clearing and through the fire like a mad surrealist's rendering of the Angel of Death.

With the coming of dawn I returned to the campsite and hurriedly packed the more important gear and the precious rolls leaving the tents and utensils to rot away. I paused briefly at the burial ground to pack the few cases of unprocessed rolls I had left there. Then I rode headlong through the forest, toward Dunstable, as fast as the pack horses and Varnum's riderless mount would permit.

A CLOYING fear hung over the town where I arrived after a two-day journey. Work had halted at the mill. The inhabitants gathered in tight knots along the main street. At the police office the Sheriff of Sussex County was talking with the district coroner. Varnum's body had been found that morning in the millpond, borne like the animal corpses on the flood of the Penaubsket.

Given the circumstances of his death, I chose to edit my statement—the events of that night seemed too fantastic to be believed. Accordingly, I reported that I had heard Varnum screaming in the underbrush as he ran toward the river, and that he had apparently tumbled down the bank in his frenzy and drowned.

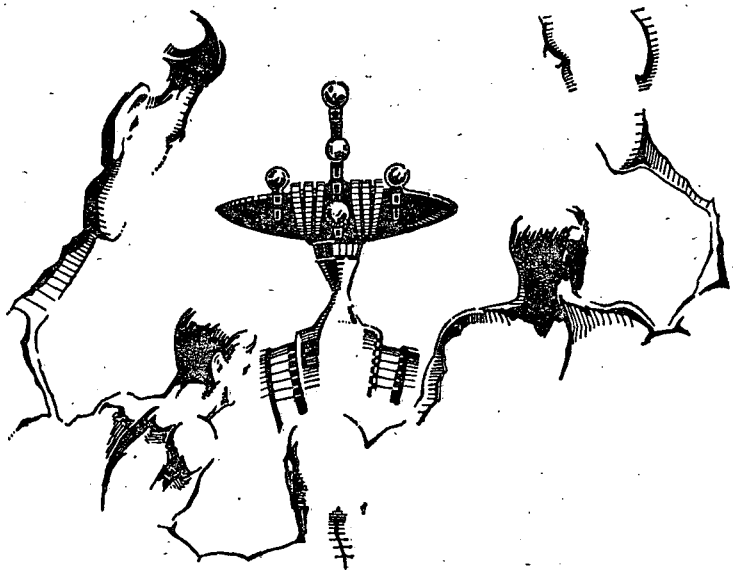
The officials received my statement with no sign of disbelief. We walked to the local undertaking parlor to view the corpse. Although in the water for only 36 hours, the body was badly mangled from snagging on obstacles in the Penaubsket. However, it was unmistakeably Varnum, but with the remains of his face twisted into an uncannily ironic smile, a true *risus sardonicus*. The areas of unscratched flesh were covered with numerous reddish weals and puckers.

The coroner saw me stiffen at the sight of the marks. He tapped the cold flesh with his pencil. "Bee stings," he said. "He must have tramped down on a bee nest, and run from them down the bank into the river." His tone was that of a man disbelieving his own diagnosis. I nodded my head in false agreement, for I had seen such marks once in Alexandria. They were unmistakeably the first tokens of smallpox.

On the following morning I ended my stay in Dunstable, not wishing to remain for the funeral of a man who had perished in such a loathsome manner before my eyes. As I sat in the passenger coach lurching southward toward Boston and civilization, I mused over the events at the bur-

(*Continued on page 88*)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



The Cultural Tour worried about the vanished Terrans: To be without an inner spirit, and yet to need one so badly! So they decided to conduct . . .

A RITUAL FOR SOULS

By ALBERT TEICHNER

Illustrator ADRAGNA

". . . . x - - - - - x - -," said Nelar matter of factly.

"Speak English!" Zanko barked back at him, platinum scalp haloing with electric anger. The universal joints of his five eyesockets swiveled until all eight youngsters in this Cultural Tour group had been covered. The halo slowly faded. "English was the predominant language of the species and didn't you spend half of yesterday absorbing it into your memory banks?"

"Forgive me, oh Mentor Zan-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ko," Nelar pleaded. "It is such a bulky form of communication that I forgot. But picturesque too!"

"Picturesque!" they all agreed, resonating the word up and down several octaves of their central voice boxes as if it were in up-to-date speed Dihdahdit rather than the semantic system of a galactic backwater.

"Picturesque? I suppose so, but," now Zanko was solemn, "but it's barely possible that tiny, dead hulk of a planet may be of the type on which our most distant ancestors' ancestors were fabricated. If so, we naturally and quickly evolved beyond anything Earthling-types could ever be. There, in brief, is the tragedy of such peculiar creatures—technological misfits."

As was proper for this kind of excursion session, the tourists, seated on a broad mesa facing Betelgeuse, were in a semi-circle about their guide. At the extreme right end of the group Hally raised a newly-acquired hand of cellflesh through the red light of their home star and said: "I have found something even more important in scanning our records of this Earth. They had, these humans, no souls!"

There was a great metallic gasp not at all in keeping with their attempt at human characteristics and Zanko gestured for silence: "I never went into that question—so many other dead planetary cultures to cover, and living ones also—but I imagine you may be right. What gave you the idea, Hally?"

"Many of them said it about themselves. For instance, there was this 'behaviorism'."

"Well, don't get overinvolved in this primitive culture," Zanko warned them. "You wanted to have human exteriors to catch the mood of those times and permission was granted for the temporary transformation as it always is, but soullessness is incredibly rare. Avoid it." He paused. "I've been seeking this 'behaviorism' idea in myself and find nothing."

"I came across it in an archeological record too," said Nelar. "It was a form of the belief that mind and soul were illusions, and that form was first expressed by a psychologist. It had great influence and, years after his death, became the official philosophy. This scientist said that if you wanted to study human behavior you inspected movements of face and body and electrochemical happenings—you didn't have to assume a mind was behind them at all."

"How exotic!" they all chattered excitedly. "No minds, no souls!"

"That was one part of their behaviorism," said Hally. "Another part I came across showed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that men kept looking for their souls and minds because of some inner sickness even though, logically, they knew such things did not exist."

"Double tragedy," Zanko sighed. "Not only to be without a soul but also to need one! Once the earliest androids were made by the robots this problem never arose—our direct line of ancestors had souls right from the beginning. Always depressing to come across defective species." The Molecular hour-glass in his neck gave its warning throb and he rose from his bench, making the ceremonial bow to Betelgeuse. "I have a group now starting its training to feel like the rock folk of Tau Ceta zone. I shall return in three hours. Meanwhile you may continue your discussions. - - . . . . - - x . . ."

"- - . . . - - x . . ."

He whirled on his roller and shouted. "No, no, no! You people must stick to English until you decide to stop acting through an alien role and return to your native form."

"Sorry, oh master teacher," they all replied in flawless Oxford accents.

"Better," he said, rolling away on his leg with the dignity mustered only by those approaching the middle century of existence.

When he had disappeared Hally, first bowing to Betelgeuse, went over to the bench and sat down on it. He raised his human arms in measured jerks like Zanko's appendages and tried to rotate his two little blue eyes as if they were backed by universal joints. The group gave a human laugh but Nelar soon stopped, slant-framed brown eyes staring thoughtfully from his yellow face. "Behaviorism," he said of a sudden.

Hally nodded, his blonde hair falling over his brow—how inconveniently built some species were!—and he pushed back the mop. "They had no true inner side, mere biochemical machines. When they convinced themselves of this fact existence became hopeless for them."

Nelar agreed. "Organs beneath their exteriors but no *true* inner side. They were just their external actions, these monstrous creatures. Do you see what I am getting at?"

"Not clearly, Nelar. Don't forget that, while in this alien form, I receive none of your thoughts. They must come through clumsy sight and sound."

"Communicating just through external actions like that—what an exciting idea!" Nelar tested his arms, waving them about to express his emotion. "I can feel these pores all over my skin costume opening and emitting moisture! All right then, here's my point. We now have human bod-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ies so if we go through their precise behavior we should have the unique opportunity of experiencing things *exactly* as they did!"

"All the other species we've imitated had minds and souls of their own which we could barely touch, never grasp." Hally's eyes widened. "If we as a group drain the Central Record Bank of available data on human behavior traits, we'll be *all* the humans were themselves!"

Nelar's face, molded to oriental inscrutability, showed nothing, as he asked, "Do we have to wait for permission from Zanko?"

"And waste three hours waiting?" demanded Phenlo who had acquired a brown skin over a short frame.

Nelar started a quintuple-segments bow of agreement until he realized his present form could not accomplish the traditional courtesy. He let his face become flushed with blood, an Earth custom indicative of embarrassment. This response seemed justified because several fellow tourists had snickered at his attempt to bow from joints not presently possessed. Now they were applauding him for his shrewd recovery of human traits.

"Thank you, thank you very much," he said, the corners of his mouth pulling outwards into a smile. "I agree with Hally and Phenlo—waiting would be foolish. Cultural travel regulation 239 says that if a group votes unanimously for a change it need not depend on its mentor's approval. Now then, my suggestion is for us to withdraw our intelligences from these flesh bodies for an hour and telepathically tap the planetary memory bank for compacted images of human behavior. Upon returning to our present form, we will then be able to act out our humanity!"

"Agreed!" they roared. With the last dying echo of that vote the bodies became as statues, one about to grin, another raising a hand enthusiastically toward heaven, a third glancing at the other's raised hand.

ONE hour later the eyes came away from that hand as it descended to its owner's side and the grin completed its brief growth. Every body was stirring back into life. "From now on," said Nelar, "we enact the gestures we have just studied. We become totally human!"

Hally rushed up to him, grabbing his hand and shaking it vigorously. "Great to see you, Nelar, how's the world treating you?"

"I make no protest to the ways of fate," said Nelar.

"All things be praised!" said Phenlo, pressing his palms flat against each other and raising them to his lips.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It looks like rain," someone was murmuring.

"Certainly does," someone else was answering. "Terrible weather lately."

"My loved ones have all died away," said a third man, his black face wrinkling into old age to let tears move down time's sudden crevasses, "and I am the last of my family."

A thin, dark-haired youth cried out: "No females in our group—I will die for lack of love!" His features, too, fell into old age and his back crumpled arthritically forward. "Now it no longer matters. I am at peace with myself."

Then the arthritic straightened up, became a middle-aged man striding energetically to work, after which he moved further back to youthfulness at the same time as Phenlo became more lithely young also. The two started jogging along side by side toward a distant outcropping of crystal ferns but the trot gradually mounted to a frantic run, chests thrown out, panting tongues thrust into the resisting atmosphere. Rounding the translucent clump, their bodies glowed goldenly through it, and when they reappeared around the other side, the others fell still and gaped intently at the pair. The race ended with the two youths approximately abreast of each other.

"Young Ragel has won," Hally said calmly; some men began cheering, others booing. "And Phenlo has lost."

"*I* won!" Phenlo insisted, voice rising to a shriek. "You thieving yellow fraud!"

Hally's eyes betrayed his anger. "Brown scum," he muttered.

They moved ominously toward each other, then circled about uneasily, just out of arm's reach. "The blonde beast provoked them to this!" someone shouted.

"No, the black one did it!" another shouted back.

Suddenly the two men grabbed for each other's throats and all the others, save Nelar, joined in. "No, no," he cried, "you're going too far, regain control of yourselves!" But even as he said this, he, himself, was jumping into the center of the melee, striking out as fiercely as the rest.

When the first signs of blood appeared on arms and faces the fury was redoubled but they did fall back to regain lost strength. The eight men eyed each other suspiciously, then started to move in again, forming three tiny factions. As soon as the fighting resumed, though, these factions broke up and new alignments developed which lasted no longer than those before had.

Now the shouts, too, were different:

"Infidels!"

"Atheists!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Superstitious ignoramuses!"

Then:

"Reds!"

"Reactionary dogs!"

"Fascist radicals!"

One individual, unidentifiable in the welter of his own blood, had fallen beneath the feet of the others and was being intermittently trampled by people who were no longer even aware of his existence.

And now the epithets were being spat with the most volcanic anger of all:

"Subhuman animals!"

"Pseudo-human machines!" and these phrases were repeated with even greater frequency than the blows accompanying them. As the man on the ground became still, each man started to spit the words at himself even though the general battle continued.

ZANKO was rolling happily along the mesa with Totle. *A very great honor to have the company of so richly-experienced a mentor,* he intuited to the oldster at his side.

It is nothing at all. Some day you will have my knowledge, Totle's mind intuited back. *I just enjoyed your session with the Tau Ceta tourists so much that I had to come along and see what your other group is like. Incidentally, why aren't you contacting them now? What's happened?*

Oh, they're working through a non-telepathic culture. Planet Earth—humanity.

Risky civilization to leave the young with.

The gloom accompanying this message brought uneasiness to Zanko's mind and he speeded up his roller. They rounded a fern clump and there were the youngsters in a tight grouping of shouting, madly struggling human bodies. *Stop it, stop it!* Zanko thought at his most intensive inner pitch but the message echoed back with agonizing reverberatory force, failing to pentrate their tiny communication nets.

". . . x x . - - - x x . - -," he shouted when he came closer but at first they did not even look up. When they did all combat ceased and there was an ominous silence.

Don't get that close, something may be totally wrong, Totle warned but Zanko rolled up to them and stood by the fallen body.

Suddenly they were shouting "Alien monster! Destroy it, destroy it!" and threw themselves upon him. Each time he pushed them off the human bodies returned unthinkingly to the attack.

You'll have to ray them, Totle telepathed.

But that would destroy ALL

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of each person, including their true centers!

Can't be helped. They've already lost their true being.

A crude human finger started to tug at the eighteenth and most delicate joint of his left appendage, and when he cracked the finger, provoking a wild shriek of pain, another hand grabbed there more effectively. Shuddering at the thought of what had to be done, Zanko gathered the force of his brain as well as that of Totle's and focussed that energy through the center eye. One sweeping glance over them and they fell into a heap of charring flesh which evaporated in a smoke cloud leaving only the melted true cores to flow across the ground, totally destroyed.

Zanko threw himself into the proper one-minute mourning period and Totle respected that mandatory message silence. Then Zanko thought: *What cannot be undone is not to be regretted endlessly, it is so written. But for the future I must know where the mistake was made in reliving this soulless culture.*

Soulless culture, Zanko? That precisely was the mistake! These young people went so thoroughly through the outer motions of the extinct species that they evoked its very soul.

How can that be? Humans, themselves, ended up denying that they had minds or souls! In the end they viewed themselves as merely natural mechanisms.

Well, as in so many other ways, my dear friend Zanko, they were wrong.

The younger mentor remained unsatisfied. *When we live other species' lives we discover to some extent how they experience the universe but their souls remain inviolable, separate from ours.*

Totle's depression swallowed the whole landscape. *There's where they differed from the tens of thousands of other relatively advanced species. I am sorry, Zanko, that you have to learn the truth of this so young but it was your very rare bad luck to have an undisciplined group at the same time that the touring lottery gave you the only known creatures in the whole universe whose very souls were evil!*

Totle rolled ahead of his younger companion. *Come along now,* he was saying, *let's return to the pleasanter atmosphere of Tau Ceta and find out how the stones are feeling.*

Zanko happily increased his current to catch up with the wise one after giving three reverential bows of gratitude toward Betelgeuse for his having been fabricated, not born. The joy of being stone and star and self, undivided, was already returning and there was nothing in the universe he could resent or regret.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE RULE OF NAMES

By URSULA K. LE GUIN

The village resented slightly having to make do with Mr. (non-truename) Underhill, for a wizard. They did not know how well off they were.

MR. UNDERHILL came out from under his hill, smiling and breathing hard. Each breath shot out of his nostrils as a double puff of steam, snow-white in the morning sunshine. Mr. Underhill looked up at the bright December sky and smiled wider than ever, showing snow-white teeth. Then he went down to the village.

"Morning, Mr. Underhill," said the villagers as he passed them in the narrow street between houses with conical, overhanging roofs like the fat red caps of toadstools. "Morning, morning!" he replied to each. (It was of course bad luck to wish anyone a *good* morning; a simple statement of the time of day was quite enough, in a place so permeated with Influences as Sattins Island, where a careless adjective might change the weather for a week.) All of them spoke to him, some with affection, some with affectionate disdain. He was all the little island had in the way of a wizard, and so deserved respect —but how could you respect a little fat man of fifty who waddled along with his toes turned in, breathing steam and smiling? He was no great shakes as a workman either. His fireworks were fairly elaborate but his elixirs were weak. Warts he charmed off frequently reappeared after three days; tomatoes he enchanted grew no bigger than canteloupes; and those rare times when a strange ship stopped at Sattins harbor, Mr. Underhill always stayed under his hill—for fear, he explained, of the evil eye. He was, in other words, a wizard the way wall-eyed Gan was a carpenter: by default. The villagers made do with badly-hung doors and inefficient spells, for this generation, and relieved their annoyance by treating Mr. Underhill quite fa-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

miliarly, as a mere fellow-villager. They even asked him to dinner. Once he asked some of them to dinner, and served a splendid repast, with silver, crystal, damask, roast goose, sparkling Andrades '639, and plum pudding with hard sauce; but he was so nervous all through the meal that it took the joy out of it, and besides, everybody was hungry again half an hour afterward. He did not like anyone to visit his cave, not even the anteroom, beyond which in fact nobody had ever got. When he saw people approaching the hill he always came trotting to meet them. "Let's sit out here under the pine trees!" he would say, smiling and waving towards the fir-grove, or if it was raining, "Let's go have a drink at the inn, eh?" though everybody knew he drank nothing stronger than well-water.

SOME of the village children, teased by that locked cave, poked and pried and made raids while Mr. Underhill was away; but the small door that led into the inner chamber was spell-shut, and it seemed for once to be an effective spell. Once a couple of boys, thinking the wizard was over on the West Shore curing Mrs. Ruuna's sick donkey, brought a crowbar and a hatchet up there, but at the first whack of the hatchet on the door there came a roar of wrath from inside, and a cloud of purple steam. Mr. Underhill had got home early. The boys fled. He did not come out, and the boys came to no harm, though they said you couldn't believe what a huge hooting howling hissing horrible bellow that little fat man could make unless you'd heard it.

His business in town this day was three dozen fresh eggs and a pound of liver; also a stop at Seacaptain Fogeno's cottage to renew the seeing-charm on the old man's eyes (quite useless when applied to a case of detached retina, but Mr. Underhill kept trying), and finally a chat with old Goody Guld the concertina-maker's widow. Mr. Underhill's friends were mostly old people. He was timid with the strong young men of the village, and the girls were shy of him. "He makes me nervous, he smiles so much," they all said, pouting, twisting silky ringlets round a finger. "Nervous" was a newfangled word, and their mothers all replied grimly, "Nervous my foot, silliness is the word for it. Mr. Underhill is a very respectable wizard!"

After leaving Goody Guld, Mr. Underhill passed by the school, which was being held this day out on the common. Since no one on Sattins Island was literate, there were no books to learn to read from and no desks to carve

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

initials on and no blackboards to erase, and in fact no schoolhouse. On rainy days the children met in the loft of the Communal Barn, and got hay in their pants; on sunny days the schoolteacher, Palani, took them anywhere she felt like. Today, surrounded by thirty interested children under twelve and forty uninterested sheep under five, she was teaching an important item on the curriculum: the Rules of Names. Mr. Underhill, smiling shyly, paused to listen and watch. Palani, a plump, pretty girl of twenty, made a charming picture there in the wintry sunlight, sheep and children around her, a leafless oak above her, and behind her the dunes and sea and clear, pale sky. She spoke earnestly, her face flushed pink by wind and words. "Now you know the Rules of Names already, children. There are two, and they're the same on every island in the world. What's one of them?"

"It ain't polite to ask anybody what his name is," shouted a fat, quick boy, interrupted by a little girl shrieking, "You can't never tell your own name to nobody my ma says!"

"Yes, Suba. Yes, Popi dear, don't screech. That's right. You never ask anybody his name. You never tell your own. Now think about that a minute and then tell me why we call our wizard Mr. Underhill." She smiled across the curly heads and the woolly backs at Mr. Underhill, who beamed, and nervously clutched his sack of eggs.

"Cause he lives under a hill!" said half the children.

"But is it his truename?"

"No!" said the fat boy, echoed by little Popi shrieking, "No!"

"How do you know it's not?"

"Cause he came here all alone and so there wasn't anybody knew his truename so they could not tell us, and *he* couldn't—"

"Very good, Suba. Popi, don't shout. That's right. Even a wizard can't tell his truename. When you children are through school and go through the Passage, you'll leave your childnames behind and keep only your truenames, which you must never ask for and never give away. Why is that the rule?"

THE children were silent. The sheep bleated gently. Mr. Underhill answered the question: "Because the name is the thing," he said in his shy, soft, husky voice, "and the truename is the true thing. To speak the name is to control the thing. Am I right, Schoolmistress?"

She smiled and curtseyed, evidently a little embarrassed by his participation. And he trotted off towards his hill, clutching the eggs to his bosom. Somehow the minute spent watching Palani and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the children had made him very hungry. He locked his inner door behind him with a hasty incantation, but there must have been a leak or two in the spell, for soon the bare anteroom of the cave was rich with the smell of frying eggs and sizzling liver.

The wind that day was light and fresh out of the west, and on it at noon a little boat came skimming the bright waves into Sattins harbor. Even as it rounded the point a sharp-eyed boy spotted it, and knowing, like every child on the island, every sail and spar of the forty boats of the fishing fleet, he ran down the street calling out, "A foreign boat, a foreign boat!" Very seldom was the lonely isle visited by a boat from some equally lonely isle of the East Reach, or an adventurous trader from the Archipelago. By the time the boat was at the pier half the village was there to greet it, and fishermen were following it homewards, and cowherds and clamdiggers and herb-hunters were puffing up and down all the rocky hills, heading towards the harbor.

But Mr. Underhill's door stayed shut.

There was only one man aboard the boat. Old Seacaptain Fogeno, when they told him that, drew down a bristle of white brows over his unseeing eyes. "There's only one kind of man," he said, "that sails the Outer Reach alone. A wizard, or a warlock, or a Mage . . ."

So the villagers were breathless hoping to see for once in their lives a Mage, one of the mighty White Magicians of the rich, towered, crowded inner islands of the Archipelago. They were disappointed, for the voyager was quite young, a handsome black-bearded fellow who hailed them cheerfully from his boat, and leaped ashore like any sailor glad to have made port. He introduced himself at once as a sea-peddlar. But when they told Seacaptain Fogeno that he carried an oaken walking-stick around with him, the old man nodded. "Two wizards in one town," he said. "Bad!" And his mouth snapped shut like an old carp's.

AS the stranger could not give them his name, they gave him one right away: Blackbeard. And they gave him plenty of attention. He had a small mixed cargo of cloth and sandals and *piswi* feathers for trimming cloaks and cheap incense and levity stones and fine herbs and great glass beads from Venway—the usual peddlar's lot. Everyone on Sattins Island came to look, to chat with the voyager, and perhaps to buy something—"Just to remember him by!" cackled Goody Guld, who like all

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the women and girls of the village was smitten with Blackbeard's bold good looks. All the boys hung round him too, to hear him tell of his voyages to far, strange islands of the Reach or describe the great rich islands of the Archipelago, the Inner Lanes, the roadsteads white with ships, and the golden roofs of Havnor. The men willingly listened to his tales; but some of them wondered why a trader should sail alone, and kept their eyes thoughtfully upon his oaken staff.

But all this time Mr. Underhill stayed under his hill.

"This is the first island I've ever seen that had no wizard," said Blackbeard one evening to Goody Guld, who had invited him and her nephew and Palani in for a cup of rushwash tea. "What do you do when you get a toothache, or the cow goes dry?"

"Why, we've got Mr. Underhill!" said the old woman.

"For what that's worth," muttered her nephew Birt, and then blushed purple and spilled his tea. Birt was a fisherman, a large, brave, wordless young man. He loved the schoolmistress, but the nearest he had come to telling her of his love was to give baskets of fresh mackerel to her father's cook.

"Oh, you do have a wizard?" Blackbeard asked. "Is he invisible?"

"No, he's just very shy," said Palani. "You've only been here a week, you know, and we see so few strangers here . . ." She also blushed a little, but did not spill her tea.

Blackbeard smiled at her. "He's a good Sattinsman, then, eh?"

"No," said Goody Guld, "no more than you are. Another cup, nevvy? keep it in the cup this time. No, my dear, he came in a little bit of a boat, four years ago was it? just a day after the end of the shad run, I recall, for they was taking up the nets over in East Creek, and Pondi Cowherd broke his leg that very morning —five years ago it must be. No, four. No, five it is, 'twas the year the garlic didn't sprout. So he sails in on a bit of a sloop loaded full up with great chests and boxes and says to Seacaptain Fogeno, who wasn't blind then, though old enough goodness knows to be blind twice over, 'I hear tell,' he says, 'you've got no wizard nor warlock at all, might you be wanting one?'— 'Indeed, if the magic's white!' says the Captain, and before you could say cuttlefish Mr. Underhill had settled down in the cave under the hill and was charming the mange off Goody Beltow's cat. Though the fur grew in grey, and 'twas an orange cat. Queerlooking thing it was after that. It died last winter in the cold

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

spell. Goody Beltow took on so at that cat's death, poor thing, worse than when her man was drowned on the Long Banks, the year of the long herring-runs, when nevvy Birt here was but a babe in petticoats." Here Birt spilled his tea again, and Blackbeard grinned, but Goody Guld proceeded undismayed, and talked on till nightfall.

NEXT day Blackbeard was down at the pier, seeing after the sprung board in his boat which he seemed to take a long time fixing, and as usual drawing the taciturn Sattinsmen into talk. "Now which of these is your wizard's craft?" he asked. "Or has he got one of those the Mages fold up into a walnut shell when they're not using it?"

"Nay," said a stolid fisherman. "She's oop in his cave, under hill."

"He carried the boat he came in up to his cave?"

"Aye. Clear oop. I helped. Heavier as lead she was. Full oop with great boxes, and they full oop with books o' spells, he says. Heavier as lead she was." And the solid fisherman turned his back, sighing stolidly. Goody Guld's nephew, mending a net nearby, looked up from his work and asked with equal stolidity, "Would ye like to meet Mr. Underhill, maybe?"

Blackbeard returned Birt's look. Clever black eyes met candid blue ones for a long moment; then Blackbeard smiled and said, "Yes. Will you take me up to the hill, Birt?"

"Aye, when I'm done with this," said the fisherman. And when the net was mended, he and the Archipelagan set off up the village street towards the high green hill above it. But as they crossed the common Blackbeard said, "Hold on a while, friend Birt. I have a tale to tell you, before we meet your wizard."

"Tell away," says Birt, sitting down in the shade of a live-oak.

"It's a story that started a hundred years ago, and isn't finished yet—though it soon will be, very soon . . . In the very heart of the Archipelago, where the islands crowd thick as flies on honey, there's a little isle called Pendor. The sealords of Pendor were mighty men, in the old days of war before the League. Loot and ransom and tribute came pouring into Pendor, and they gathered a great treasure there, long ago. Then from somewhere away out in the West Reach, where dragons breed on the lava isles, came one day a very mighty dragon. Not one of those overgrown lizards most of you Outer Reach folk call dragons, but a big, black, winged, wise, cunning monster, full of strength and subtlety, and like all dragons loving gold and precious stones

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

above all things. He killed the Sealord and his soldiers, and the people of Pendor fled in their ships by night. They all fled away and left the dragon coiled up in Pendor Towers. And there he stayed for a hundred years, dragging his scaly belly over the emeralds and sapphires and coins of gold, coming forth only once in a year or two when he must eat. He'd raid nearby islands for his food. You know what dragons eat?"

Birt nodded and said in a whisper, "Maidens."

"Right," said Blackbeard. "Well, that couldn't be endured forever, nor the thought of him sitting on all that treasure. So after the League grew strong, and the Archipelago wasn't so busy with wars and piracy, it was decided to attack Pendor, drive out the dragon, and get the gold and jewels for the treasury of the League. They're forever wanting money, the League is. So a huge fleet gathered from fifty islands, and seven Mages stood in the prows of the seven strongest ships, and they sailed towards Pendor . . . They got there. They landed. Nothing stirred. The houses all stood empty, the dishes on the tables full of a hundred years' dust. The bones of the old Sealord and his men lay about in the castle courts and on the stairs. And the Tower rooms reeked of dragon. But there was no dragon. And no treasure, not a diamond the size of a poppyseed, not a single silver bead . . . Knowing that he couldn't stand up to seven Mages, the dragon had skipped out. They tracked him, and found he'd flown to a deserted island up north called Udrath; they followed his trail there, and what did they find? Bones again. His bones—the dragon's. But no treasure. A wizard, some unknown wizard from somewhere, must have met him singlehanded, and defeated him —and then made off with the treasure, right under the League's nose!"

THE fisherman listened, attentive and expressionless.

"Now that must have been a powerful wizard and a clever one, first to kill a dragon, and second to get off without leaving a trace. The lords and Mages of the Archipelago couldn't track him at all, neither where he'd come from nor where he'd made off to. They were about to give up. That was last spring; I'd been off on a three-year voyage up in the North Reach, and got back about that time. And they asked me to help them find the unknown wizard. That was clever of them. Because I'm not only a wizard myself, as I think some of the oafs here have guessed, but I am also a descendant of the Lords

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Pendor. That treasure is mine. It's mine, and knows that it's mine. Those fools of the League couldn't find it, because it's not theirs. It belongs to the House of Pendor, and the great emerald, the star of the hoard, Inalkil the Greenstone, knows its master. Behold!" Blackbeard raised his oaken staff and cried aloud, "Inalkil!" The tip of the staff began to glow green, a fiery green radiance, a dazzling haze the color of April grass, and at the same moment the staff tipped in the wizard's hand, leaning, slanting till it pointed straight at the side of the hill above them.

"It wasn't so bright a glow, far away in Havnor," Blackbeard murmured, "but the staff pointed true. Inalkil answered when I called. The jewel knows its master. And I know the thief, and I shall conquer him. He's a mighty wizard, who could overcome a dragon. But I am mightier. Do you want to know why, oaf? Because I know his name!"

As Blackbeard's tone got more arrogant, Birt had looked duller and duller, blanker and blanker; but at this he gave a twitch, shut his mouth, and stared at the Archipelagan. "How did you . . . learn it?" he asked very slowly.

Blackbeard grinned, and did not answer.

"Black magic?"

"How else?"

Birt looked pale, and said nothing.

"I am the Sealord of Pendor, oaf, and I will have the gold my fathers won, and the jewels my mothers wore, and the Greenstone! For they are mine.—Now, you can tell your village boobies the whole story after I have defeated this wizard and gone. Wait here. Or you can come and watch, if you're not afraid. You'll never get the chance again to see a great wizard in all his power." Blackbeard turned, and without a backward glance strode off up the hill towards the entrance to the cave.

Very slowly, Birt followed. A good distance from the cave he stopped, sat down under a hawthorn tree, and watched. The Archipelagan had stopped; a stiff, dark figure alone on the green swell of the hill before the gaping cave-mouth, he stood perfectly still. All at once he swung his staff up over his head, and the emerald radiance shone about him as he shouted, "Thief, thief of the Hoard of Pendor, come forth!"

There was a crash, as of dropped crockery, from inside the cave, and a lot of dust came spewing out. Scared, Birt ducked. When he looked again he saw Blackbeard still standing motionless, and at the mouth of the cave, dusty and dishevelled, stood Mr. Underhill. He looked

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

small and pitiful, with his toes turned in as usual, and his little bowlegs in black tights, and no staff—he never had had one, Birt suddenly thought. Mr. Underhill spoke. "Who are you?" he said in his husky little voice.

"I am the Sealord of Pendor, thief, come to claim my treasure!"

AT that, Mr. Underhill slowly turned pink, as he always did when people were rude to him. But he then turned something else. He turned yellow. His hair bristled out, he gave a coughing roar—and was a yellow lion leaping down the hill at Blackbeard, white fangs gleaming.

But Blackbeard no longer stood there. A gigantic tiger, color of night and lightning, bounded to meet the lion . . .

The lion was gone. Below the cave all of a sudden stood a high grove of trees, black in the winter sunshine. The tiger, checking himself in mid-leap just before he entered the shadow of the trees, caught fire in the air, became a tongue of flame lashing out at the dry black branches . . .

But where the trees had stood a sudden cataract leaped from the hillside, an arch of silvery crashing water, thundering down upon the fire. But the fire was gone . . .

For just a moment before the fisherman's staring eyes two hills rose—the green one he knew, and a new one, a bare, brown hillock ready to drink up the rushing waterfall. That passed so quickly it made Birt blink, and after blinking he blinked again, and moaned, for what he saw now was a great deal worse. Where the cataract had been there hovered a dragon. Black wings darkened all the hill, steel claws reached groping, and from the dark, scaly, gaping lips fire and steam shot out.

Beneath the monstrous creature stood Blackbeard, laughing.

"Take any shape you please, little Mr. Underhill!" he taunted. "I can match you. But the game grows tiresome. I want to look upon my treasure, upon Inalkil. Now, big dragon, little wizard, take your true shape. I command you by the power of your true name—Yevaud!"

Birt could not move at all, not even to blink. He cowered staring whether he would or not. He saw the black dragon hang there in the air above Blackbeard. He saw the fire lick like many tongues from the scaly mouth, the steam jet from the red nostrils. He saw Blackbeard's face grow white, white as chalk, and the beard-fringed lips trembling.

"Your name is Yevaud!"

"Yes," said a great, husky,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hissing voice. "My truename is Yevaud, and my true shape is this shape."

"But the dragon was killed—they found dragon-bones on Udrath Island—"

"That was another dragon," said the dragon, and then stooped like a hawk, talons outstretched. And Birt shut his eyes.

When he opened them the sky was clear, the hillside empty, except for a reddish-blackish, trampled spot, and a few talon-marks in the grass.

Birt the fisherman got to his feet and ran. He ran across the common, scattering sheep to right and left, and straight down the village street to Palani's father's house. Palani was out in the garden weeding the nasturtiums. "Come with me!" Birt gasped. She stared. He grabbed her wrist and dragged her with him. She screeched a little, but did not resist. He ran with her straight to the pier, pushed her into his fishing-sloop the *Queenie*, untied the painter, took up the oars and set off rowing like a demon. The last that Sattins Island saw of him and Palani was the *Queenie*'s sail vanishing in the direction of the nearest island westward.

The villagers thought they would never stop talking about it, how Goody Guld's nephew Birt had lost his mind and sailed off with the schoolmistress on the very same day that the peddlar Blackbeard disappeared without a trace, leaving all his feathers and beads behind. But they did stop talking about it, three days later. They had other things to talk about, when Mr. Underhill finally came out of his cave.

Mr. Underhill had decided that since his truename was no longer a secret, he might as well drop his disguise. Walking was a lot harder than flying, and besides, it was a long, long time since he had had a real meal.

THE END

THE DUNSTABLE HORROR

(*Continued from page 71*)

ial ground as if they were dreams remembered from the delerium of an illness. But they were real enough, as real as the pictographs in the baggage car, recording the extinction of the tribe and the curse on the Varnum house. Thinking of this I wondered who would believe me if I ever let it be known that on the morning after Varnum's death, while collecting the rolls at the burial ground, I saw at the very bottom of the open grave a faint area of bone-colored powder outlining the form of a man, and knew that after three centuries, Pauquatoag of the Massaquoits had come to rest.

THE END

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Thrift, Jethro my boy, thrift! Not only do we save money on silver bullets—we can save an extra $3.01 by using the Discount Coupon below!"

Save $3.01 on

STORIES OF IMAGINATION

FANTASTIC

12 eerie issues only $2.99

(newsstand value, $6! reg. subscription rate, $4)

FANTASTIC means Fantasy at its provocative best! Feel the hair rise on the nape of your neck as incredibly ancient horrors slither from their age-old crypts! Futilely ward off exploratory tendrils from the alien intellect that will contact, occupy—and finally conquer—the inmost secrets of your mind and soul!

Prostrate yourself in awe as the Old Gods return to chastise a wayward, erring Earth. Flee through thick-boled forests that time forgot—but never quite fast enough to lose the demons, witches and warlocks that loom up before you in the foul miasma of your own imagination!

Stimulating, Eerie, Sophisticated, Satirical, even Tragic—FANTASTIC will fire your intellect and grip your emotions from cover to cover! It is the Magazine of the Masters—FRITZ LEIBER, ROBERT ARTHUR, JACK SHARKEY, RAY BRADBURY, J. G. BALLARD, ROBERT F. YOUNG! Plus vintage classics from the pens of H. P. LOVECRAFT, ROBERT E. HOWARD, and many more!

FANTASTIC is your magazine. Subscribe now! You save $3.01 on the newsstand price—and get each issue **days earlier!**

☐ **YES,** send me 12 months of FANTASTIC, and bill me later for only $2.99 (newsstand value, $6.00).

☐ Or, my payment of $2.99 enclosed **now.**

Name_____

Address_____ 1-1004

City_____ Zone_____ State_____

(Add 50¢ per year additional postage for Canada and Pan American countries; add $1 per year extra for all other foreign orders.)

EXTRA SAVING!
24 issues only $5.75

☐ Bill me later

☐ My payment enclosed now

MAIL TO: FANTASTIC/434 So. Wabash Ave./Chicago 5, Illinois

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Devil Came

By FULTON T. GRANT

Introduction by Sam Moskowitz

One of the oldest, most honorable and popular avenues of the science fiction literary community is the tale categorized as the "Lost Race" story. Fundamentally, the greatest treasure sought by any explorer is to find a hitherto undiscovered or long-separated living, human culture. When man lands upon the planets and painstakingly begins a search for life forms, he is secretly hoping that among them some will be human.

Therein lies the appeal of a very special group of writers whose craft frequently falls within the pale of science fiction but even when it merely flits about the periphery of the genre retains an equal fascination. Most famed of them all was H. Rider Haggard whose ability to find a lost race or tribe in every ruin, in every jungle clearing or mountain valley was unsurpassed.

His heir apparent was Talbot

Reprinted from Bluebook, *January 1937.* *Copyright 1937 by the McCall Corporation. Reprinted by permission.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to Our Valley

Illustrator

SCHELLING

Mundy, but actually much more potent conjurers of races lost to civilization were story telling wizards Edgar Rice Burroughs and A. Merritt whose novels abounded in strange cities invested with all the romance of alien people whose actions were divorced from the flow of life about them. Edgar Rice Burroughs adventure-prone lost races were most frequently found in the darkest regions of the African Jungle, though he was scarcely loathe to locate them on the dried sea bottoms of ancient Mars or the soggy surface of Venus. A. Merritt favored unexplored regions of South America, pacific islands and Alaskan or far north locales. Like innumerable others before and after them, those two great story tellers sought out the more remote regions of the globe, little known and rarely visited, to lend belief to their escape fantasies.

Yet there has been no greater validity in proverb than that found in "Truth is stranger than

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fiction." The Devil Came to Our Valley *is a "lost race" story* that takes place less than 12 miles from New York City and within walking distance of Hackensack, N.J. *Technically it is not even a fantasy. Remnants of this strange race that Grant writes of probably still linger in what remains of wilderness in the beautiful Ramapo Valley only a short distance from the Hudson River and the strange breed of outcast dog that symbolizes their self-imposed banishment yet survive.*

This story is melodrama of the purest sort lanced through with a wild sytlistic stirring and poignancy that makes one wonder if under certain circumstances melodrama may not achieve artistic heights. Fulton Grant wrote dozens of other tales in this style and manner for BLUEBOOK *magazine, particularly from 1939 onward. He was one of a breed of individualists like H. Bedford Jones, Max Brand, George Bruce, Theodore Roscoe, George F. Worts and Fred MacIsaac, who infused the pulps with a spirit that will inspire nostalgia until that day when the last of their entranced adherents will have passed to that great reward beyond social security.*

LAST night I heard the howling of the wild dogs up on the Houvenkopf; and I knew, straightway, that there was death on the mountain. A strange, queer business is the death-howl of a dog, and it borders near those things we, in our profound ignorance, label as "supernatural." But so is the Houvenkopf a strange, queer place; and so are the wild dogs themselves a queer fact; and so was the man Mawm Rukker, whose withered, tired old soul was flickering out when the dogs set up their howling, a strange and scarcely believable coëfficient of our hills.

I suppose you younger moderns will put me down as a doddering, muddle-headed old fool of a country doctor, a simple rustic, because I listened to the howling of the dogs, and because I am naïve enough to have believed in the classical or legendary interpretation of it. You'll call me eccentric, or "touched," perhaps, because I have chosen to spend most of my life up here in the Ramapo Valley—a rural medico with a large practice and small income, trying to help our little hill people, bringing children into the world for them, earning their trust and sympathizing with them, even taking their part, sometimes, against you people who haughtily call

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

yourselves "civilized." Had I any enterprise, any decent ambition, you'll say, I might have set up offices in the city and made a fortune prescribing pills for neurotic ladies with fat bank-accounts and learning your bedside manner.

Oh, I'll admit that, my young colleagues; but that was not what I wanted. You've had it, and you're welcome; but those city people are yours, not mine. I was born among these hills, and I love them. The Houvenkopf and its strange little people have always been at my back door; and who, I ask you, would have cared for their hundreds of ill-born, ill-nourished babies? Who would have cured their croup and their measles and their ringworms? Who would have sewn up the knife-wounds for that young devil Pilter Ared, when the Merely woman stabbed him? Who would have supplied the snake-venom for scores of rattler and copperhead bites? And who, I ask you again, would have fought for justice when the Devil came into our valley and brought poison, hatred, murder, war and tragedy among those simple, untamed, unknown primitives, the Jackson Whites?

Not you, my young diagnosticians of Park Avenue—nor the school authorities which patronized them into education, nor the self-appointed missionaries, nor the law that confuses justice with doctrine.

But the dogs have howled, and Mawm Rukker is dead; and now the story can be told without harm; for Judith, the saint, may at last come down from the mountain, scattering the embers of hate to the winds of the Valley bringing her love and peace.

Mawm Rukker dead? That old rascal? Who cares for Mawm Rukker? Who cares for the Jackson Whites? Who cares for a race of outcasts, living a stone's-throw from New York City, yet who have never seen a telephone? Race of hybrids, most of them, the descendants of Indians and of deserting soldiers and of African slaves! Let them die, you'll say. Life has no time for them. New York and New Jersey have no place for them. Civilization can't wait for them. Let them get civilized or die, you'll say. And Mawm Rukker—what was that story in the papers awhile back? Wasn't there a trial? Didn't he kill somebody? Or was it his son? Wasn't there a woman in it? Nasty business, wasn't it? Mawm Rukker dead? Probably a good thing, too. . . .

But wait a minute, my smart young friends, and listen to an old man's story.

DO you know our Ramapos? Do you know that world of green hills and maples and firs

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and mica-rock and rhododendrons and tiny lakes and deer and partridge, lying on the very door-sill of Fifth Avenue, where you can drop suddenly out of a land of garish road-signs and hideous gas-stations into a quick, primitive, glorious paradise? Where the noises of industry are hushed? Where the winds are laden with soft songs of Indian lore? Where the rich black loam is bursting with a green joy?

I was born there, my young blades; and I love that country. Fifty-seven years ago I was born there, and in those days Mawm Rukker was a young man.

"Negroes," you call them? Aye, they're black enough, some of them. And there's Indian blood too. Tuscaroras, driven out of the Carolinas by settling Germans, settling in the Ramapos back in 1770 or thereabouts, and joining the Five Nations of the Iroquois. But what of the three thousand five hundred "white slaves"—women kidnaped and transported from London's slums for the Hessian mercenaries of the British army in the days when George Washington was making this country free from the absurdity of a cloddish George III? When the British were driven out of New York, those poor girls—whatever their morals, may God forgive them—were hounded into the Ramapos, to live as outcasts and to form a colony with the deserting Hessian soldiery, the Tuscaroras and a handful of black slave-girls who had been with them. There's the ancestry; put it frankly. But out of that grim background has grown, through the flux of years, a new race, primitive and strong.

And yet Mawm Rukker was from none of these.

I CAN remember vividly how the very name of him grew to be a symbol of something utterly fantastic in my own childhood. My father—he was "Old Doc" Borsden to all the Valley farmers—was something of a Tartar in his way. I can remember how he stormed at the frightened, waddling, slightly hysterical Abigail Ness, our "hired woman" on that day when I first heard of the Jackson Whites. Six or seven, I was then, and I had been guilty of some childhood naughtiness; Abigail, in her countrified illiterate anger, had tried to scare me into good behavior by pointing at the crag of the Houvenkopf with a warning finger and saying:

"Ye'll behave now, ye little fool, else Mawm Rukker the wild man'll come for ye with his pack o' dogs."

Quite overawed by the tone of her voice and by the forbidding denseness of the Houvenkopf's black forest, I whispered:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Who is Mawm Rukker?"

"He's a Jack," she said. "And for aught I know, he may be the Devil himself. Surely he's king of the mountain," she added seriously. "And he has a pack of black dogs that obey him and which no bullet can touch—and he feeds bad little boys to them, too."

Properly chastened, I remember running to ask my father what it was she meant by a "Jack." Then it was that the story came out.

A stern man, my father, but a just one. A doctor, he knew well enough the harm and the futility of frightening little children into good behavior with stories of bogey-men, whether real or fancied. But there was still another feeling in him that moved him to upbraid Abigail. He summoned her to his study, and as she stood trembling there, he paced the floor while his vibrating voice ground out:

"Abigail Ness, ye'll never tell my son another yarn about the hill people, else by God not another day's work from this family will ye get—nor from any other house in the Valley, either, as long as I live. Let you understand that. Ye'll never attempt to frighten the boy into obedience and sow the seed of fear in him, and let that also be understood, woman!

"But take ye note of this: as long as I'm alive, the Jackson White people shall be respected in this house. Strange people they may be. Wild they may be, and fearsome to you. But they're humans. God made them, woman. And likely they're as good as the rest of us. And I'll have none of your housewives' gossip about them whilst you live here."

Nevertheless, as I grew older, rumors and stories of the Jackson Whites, and especially of Mawm Rukker, came to me; and indeed that man might well have been "the Devil himself" for what was said of him. Though I was already quite a lad when first I saw him, the legends that grew around the man bloomed in my child's imagination until he became to me half-god, half-ogre.

Mawm Rukker! The very name had a sound to it. What queer kind of creature would be called "Mawm Rukker?" Was it not this Mawm Rukker who had come down from the Houvenkopf into Hillburn and nearly killed five strong men in a quarrel? Had the man not run away with Bess Tisbury, that pale, handsome daughter of a pinch-penny farmer from down Saddle River way? Had he not shot the hat from Farmer Tisbury's head and the shotgun out of the hand of Tisbury's son when the two of them, indignant and wrathful, had stormed the mountain to bring the runaway girl back home

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

again? Had he not raided a store in Oakland, stolen a sack of flour and a case of applejack, holding a whole village at bay with his deadly rifle, and laughing in the very faces of the frightened citizens? Mawm Rukker had done this; he had done that. Mawm Rukker, the fatal marksman. Mawm Rukker, the wild drunkard of the hills. Mawm Rukker, whom the black dogs, wild scourge and terror of the valley farms, obeyed like lambs! So ran the legends, making him into a fantastic, supernatural creature, sharing the identities of the pirates of old, and the highwaymen, and the noble gods of mythology in my young heart.

And then one day I saw him.

If you were born a country boy, you'll know what it is to snap 22-caliber B.B. caps at some ferocious woodchuck you have stalked as though he were some panther of the jungle What a grim, relentless huntsman you were in your 'teens! The scrawny wood near your home abounded in 'chucks and skunks and chipmunks and squirrels and perhaps an owl or two, all of which called for your unrivaled skill and prowess as a Nimrod to exterminate them. In later years we may stalk our antelope in the Senegal or lions in the Sudan, but there is no thrill in our lives like the stalking of our first woodchuck with that ancient Flobert which Grandpa gave us for our fourteenth birthday.

And I was stalking my woodchuck. Bellied in the grass, I was, my face to the wind, the scent of clover in my nostrils and the exotic pulsation of the "jungle" (perhaps half a mile from our farmstead) pumping in my veins. So intent was I upon the fat little beast which crouched by his hole, that I did not see the sharp, grass-hidden chasm where some tree-stump had been blasted out of the ground. On I crawled. I shifted to the side for better vision—and tumbled into the pit with a frightened scream,—my rifle going off as it fell in after me,—and striking my head against a sharp rock at the bottom.

WHEN I returned to consciousness, I was being carried hurriedly through the fields. Two enormous red-hairy arms held my body, and the pungent scent of wood-smoke hung over me, emanating from the man who ran with me. My head pained badly, pounding with the great, loping strides he was taking, and I could feel the steel pressure of the arms that held me so tight. I twisted around to look up into the fierce hawk features of him, and I saw the bristling thatch of red hair and the intense iron-gray eyes that peered down at me from under the hair.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And so, frightened for my life, I screamed again.

"Ha!" came the odd, foreign-seeming voice. "Soo, ut's not dead, den? Dun't screech soo. Nah, childy, yo' keep quiet whiles us run by yo' housen to Papa for feex ut wi' a bit cloth again' the blood."

Rough, the voice was, and booming, and the language was new and hard for me to make out. And the pain in my head was bad, and there was fear in me, fighting at my senses and terrifying me as I saw the huge form more clearly. The torn, faded blue shirt of him was studded with burrs, and the ragged trousers were patched with leather against the cloth, and there was a great knife sticking in the piece of rope that served him for a belt. And so, in my fear, the tears came to me.

I cried and I kicked and I struggled, but he only ran the faster, straight to our house. And when he trampled over the gray-white gravel of our driveway, he lifted his great voice and bellowed:

"Ha dere, Doc Borsden! Coom oot quick, 'cause yo' childy's bloodied on hisn haid."

My father came running.

"Hello to you, Mawm Rukker," I heard him say, and then: "Good God, man, what's the boy done to himself?"

At that fabulous name I fainted, as much from the thrill of hearing it as from the effects of my fright.

REVIVED and bandaged, I sat up in a horsehair chair in my father's office, all a-wonder that my father should dare to converse so quietly and at his ease with this monster. Rukker was still standing,—he would never sit down indoors, I learned later,—with a bit of pipe in his mouth, and his rifle dangling from his hand, carrying the odor of pine-trees and burnt leaves into the antiseptic atmosphere of the room.

My father was saying:

"I thank ye, Mawm Rukker, for fetching the lad in. And how is your own little one? And Bess herself, how is she these days? Are they all well up on the mountain? It's near time for me to come up again now."

Rukker rumbled out:

"Mine Galeg, he is goot enough. Mine Bess, she is goot for dere's a childy comin' ag'in, which is whyen I haf coom to tell yo'. She'll haf need, maybe—"

My father dismissed me with a sign, and I carried my bandaged head away, quivering with delight and terror too, to have seen Mawm Rukker in my own house, talking with Old Doc, my father, just as simply as any farmer of the Valley might have done.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

YEARS passed before I saw him again, however, although my father paid a monthly visit to the mountain, and ministered to the strange little people there. They may not have loved him, but they respected him and trusted him.

It was in 1899 that I came home from the university to begin sharing my father's practice. The whole countryside was in a turmoil. The Grange was up in arms. All the farmers had inflamed themselves to a pitch of excitement and anger that is hard to imagine. The reason was —the wild dogs of the Ramapos.

Since early childhood I had heard tales of these beasts, though as I grew older I discredited them. Legendary dogs, they were—immense beyond belief, coal-black and wolflike, running in packs of shadowy phantoms, frightening travelers, appearing and disappearing like the werewolves of fable. There were stories of their fierce raids upon the livestock of the Valley farmers; and one even heard tales of hunters, venturing in the hills, only to vanish, their bones picked clean of flesh and crushed by the fangs of these terrible beasts. However, I had grown to hold such tales lightly, and it was only now that the fact of the dogs' existence became too evident for doubt.

There had been raids. Hard winter had starved the wild dogs and fanned their courage. In Oakland, in Pompton, in Wanaque and even on the outskirts of Suffern, these great black wolf-dogs had appeared in numbers, had butchered sheep and cattle, had laid waste fifty or more barnyards, and had even attacked and torn beyond surgical intervention one of the huge Percheron stallions which were the pride of farmer Tisbury, whose daughter had eloped with the wild Rukker, years before. And if there were any room now for me to doubt the tale, one of the farmers had shot and killed a wild dog, and the carcass was plainly visible to all who cared to ride over Darlington way for a look at it.

I rode and I saw, and I confess the beast was a beauty. It must have weighed nearly one hundred and seventy pounds—big as a Dane or a mastiff, but bristling with short tufted hair, and with the lean, angular muzzle of a boar-hound. Coal-black, it was, but a ruff at its neck, flecked with gray, betrayed an admixture of wolf blood.

Whence came such beasts? Wild dogs within thirty miles of the metropolis? Impossible, you say. And yet let me quote history. Back in the Revolutionary days when the Hessian soldiers, deserting from a hopeless British army, fled to these mountains

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and joined the outcast women, those "white slaves" herded and sold by the unmentionable Jackson, some of those German fighting men brought dogs with them. Great dogs, they were: huge black boar-hounds from Brunswick and Hesse-Cassel; soldiers' dogs, beasts of almost primeval years that followed, these monster hounds, escaping from the hovels of the colonies, or driven out by their owners, bred with wolves, and a race of doubly savage beasts was born. Mongrels, they are, but thrown upon their own skill and hardihood in finding sustenance, they grew into giants of the canine species, and their descendants even today when they have interbred again with the runaway curs of near-by towns,—with housedogs from your backyard and mine,—are formidable plunderers, the scourge of the farms, the terror of the unwary stranger caught in the Ramapos at night.

Such, indeed, was the dog I saw.

SOME nights later as I was riding home from the Grange where farmers were planning a posse of riders to hunt and kill these monsters, I saw a light in my father's study. Entering, I found him in conversation with a tall, fierce, graying man, whom I soon recognized as Mawm Rukker. He had come to warn us. He had come down from his mountain fastness to plead with my father, since the Jacks trusted no other man in the Valley, and to warn him that if the farmers made a raid against the dogs and killed them, whole villages of Jackson Whites would defend the beasts. That meant war—five thousand or more wild men, turning their deadly rifles against the Valley.

"Ut moost no be," Rukker insisted. "Mine peoples, dey lof dem dogs. Dey had not lof for yo' peoples. De dogs, dey is starved. Ut is for eating dey coom down here. For yo' I haf coom to tell dis; butten for de odders, I haf no care. I do not want dis thing should be."

Then suddenly pleading,—pleading for the dogs in his strange half-intelligible language,—he said they were a part of his own, fugitives from civilization like his own, unwanted, hunted, hated like himself and his people. There was passion in his plea—passion and love. He told how many times he would shoot a deer and whistle for the dogs to feed on the carcass. He told how they knew him, and in their strange wild way, loved him and understood him. There was a bond between Mawm Rukker and the savage dogs of the Ramapos, as surely and as clearly as there can exist a tie between wild creatures, pitted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

against the onrush of civilization.

My father listened to him and there was no dog-hunt that year, for my father's voice was still law among the farmers.

BUT this is the story of the Devil, and of Judith—about a great love, and about a wood-nymph who grew too rapidly civilized; and about a great hate and revenge and a trial-by-jury and a supreme gesture of self-sacrifice; about the great humility of a saint, and an immense, long tragedy which terminated only last night with the howling of the dogs, when Mawm Rukker died and set Judith free. So let me tell it, and let it be a warning to those who would too quickly bring "civilization" as a substitute for simplicity and primitive goodness.

In 1903 my father died, and his huge if unprofitable practice fell to me, then a youngster in my early twenties.

It was in 1904 that the mission school came to the Houvenkopf. A fine, clean, earnest man was Burran Whatley, its founder, and a kindly, well-intentioned woman was his wife. A local man Whatley, born and brought up in or near the New York border, and acquainted with the Jackson Whites and their tragic ignorance. Graduating from some religious seminary and earning the title of "reverend," this young man had felt the call to bring book-learning, and the Word of God among these "heathen" of the mountain. I have no quarrel with him. The best of intentions are oftimes mistaken.

And Galeg, son of Mawm Rukker, came to the mission school. A great youth, was Galeg—some four or six years younger than I, possibly. But already taller than most men, a creature of the wilderness, like some fabulous leprechaun grown into a giant.

So it was at the mission school that Galeg, son of Mawm, met and loved little Judith. Love is quick and young among primitive peoples. They marry when mere children,—if marriage it can be called,—and it is deemed a natural thing. Simple is the ceremony. The boy's father "speaks the word." The whole settlement is gathered together, and there is drinking of much mountain beer. The boy stands and challenges any man who shall deny him this woman. If some other wants her, he must fight. And who would have challenged Galeg Rukker—Galeg, who could with his bare hands have torn apart any man?

Judith? Little Judith? Elfin, exquisite, ethereal little Judith? How can I tell you of that child, nameless and alone! That child who soon blossomed into womanhood, passed through fire and became a saint?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nameless she was, I say; nor can I give you her background. But she was not of the Jackson Whites. A fugitive from justice, presumably her father, had appeared twelve years before in my own father's time, badly wounded and terror-stricken. He "hid out" in the Ramapos, bringing his little baby,—if she was his,—and dwelt for a few weeks in one of the shacks of the Jackson Whites up on the mountain, then died there from his infected wound. My own father saw that the child was cared for by old Mary Bottle, who had thirteen other children and no husband.

But when Judith came to the mission school, she was a beauty. Dirty and ragged like any Jack child, she may have been; but her hair hung in natural ringlets, jet black, adding richness to the white satin of her skin, framing the perfect oval of her face and bringing new luster to her lovely fawn-colored eyes. But there was more than mere beauty in her. Something primitive and fundamental there was, something quietly violent, yet poised, restless yet calm. She drew from deeper sources than those Ramapo hills. Was she some child stolen from a good home, or was she the daughter of a thief? Was she born of an illicit union, the flux of some passionate tragedy? We never knew, and never learned.

But the sixteen-year-old Galeg and the fourteen-year-old Judith met in the mission school, and love was born. We could see them often, running gayly together in the fields or on the crest of the woodland, Galeg with his rifle—wild things, happy with freedom, loving as the wild birds love, their spirits blown by the free winds.

But civilization came. . . .

We cannot, with impunity, modify the pattern of a human soul. Let missionaries beware, for the leaven yeast they dispense into the hearts of "backward" people will only too often ferment into a heady wine.

THE transfiguration of Judith was a miracle. Galeg Rukker himself was quick to learn, quick to lose his hill accent, quick to become a strapping, manly, keen-witted lad whose future was before him. But Judith became a woman. More quickly still, she learned. She devoured books and saw dream-vistas of a life beyond her knowledge—a life of comforts and clothes and jewels and balls and gallant young swains and exquisite damsels. The clever fingers of Mrs. Whatley recut and fashioned dresses for her, and quickly she emerged from her cocoon of tatters into a full-blooming butterfly, as graceful and beautiful as any young woman in the land, with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rhythm and restraint in her every thought and movement.

AND then the Devil came into our valley.

The Devil's proxy was Ambrose Larning Northford, and you will remember the name. Was he not the grandson of Barnabas Northford, founder of a great fortune, whose vast estates extend for miles near Tuxedo? Was he not the son of that financial wizard whose name stands with the Goulds and the Gateses and the Fiskes, symbols of power and wealth in the fighting Wall Street days of our fathers? Innocents that we were in the Valley, we knew little of those things then, for there were few newspapers up there, and we did not know why this man should have come suddenly into a wilderness retreat among us.

But that was in 1907.

The Northford mansion, on the large acreage, bordering on the Whatleys' place, was suddenly thrown open. New servants appeared, a "horseless carriage," —the first automotive vehicle in the Valley,—and a fine stable of horses; frequently an imposing well-groomed man was seen riding about, followed by a body-servant on a lesser nag, roaming over our hills. He remained aloof. He affected a dignity and a hauteur which defeated our simple offers of conversation. Grim and hard, he seemed, and there was something in his stern, handsome, mustached face, that made us all wonder.

It was, perhaps, inevitable that Northford and Judith should meet. I do not know how it came about, but soon enough they were to be seen together, seated on those fine horses, riding about for all the world—and Galeg Rukker—to see.

Then Mawm Rukker came down from the Houvenkopf to see me in my office.

My father, in his time, had been the only Valley man whom the Jackson Whites trusted and respected; and on his death, I inherited that trust.

There was hurt and anger and puzzlement in the old man's eyes as he stood there, towering above me, in my study.

"Yoong Doc," he said in that half-negro, half-Germanic speech of the hill people, "mine Galeg, he haf tooken li'l Judy for to be hisn wooman, butten she goo a-ridin' by dot man. Mine Galeg, he will bring troppel. Much troppel. Ifn you tell dot man, maybe dere is no troppel."

They stand together, those people of the hills. They love young; they love once; and a man's chosen woman needs no benefit of clergy for her protection. "Troppel?" There would be trouble indeed with the Rukkers in this mind.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So I drove to the Northford place and visited with the man.

Dark, strong, hard, grim, he was; and mine was a useless errand. He sneered.

"Are you perchance trying to interfere in my personal affairs, Doctor Borsden?" he asked me. "Or are you merely taking sides with these half-breeds against society? Let me tell you once and for all that I am quite able to take care of myself."

He showed me out, and I felt that I had done harm and not good.

STEADILY the situation grew worse as Judith became more and more "civilized." And here I cannot blame Mrs. Whatley (dead years ago, poor lady), for what she did was natural enough. Nevertheless, it was the missionary's wife who guided Judith's social development. Clad in new and brighter clothes, a veneer of the city fitting over her woodland elfin character, the girl was taken from farmhouse to homestead, "to bring her out," as Mrs. Whatley phrased it, spending many an evening with the gentry of the region and their somewhat dowdy, if prosperous wives. The day came when Ambrose Northford, breaking all precedent, apparently, for he was usually distant with his neighbors, threw wide open the doors of his mansion and crowded the magnificent old place with people. The Whatleys—and Judith with them—were prominent among the guests, and (although I was not invited) I learned that the charming young girl was the belle of the evening at that rather overdrawn party. Gossip was born, and it was cruel toward Judith.

"Uppish little hussy!" it was said. "Imagine it! Acting up with that Northford fellow just as if she *was* somebody!"

Gossip was born and grew; and gossip was fanned into caustic fire when the report was circulated through the Valley that little Judith had "accepted a place" as housekeeper for Ambrose Larning Northford.

"That child a *housekeeper!*" ran the comment. "Well, we know what that kind of housekeeper is—the little hussy!"

NEVERTHELESS the fact of Judith's elevation to a higher social status was evident enough; nor did the more pretentious of our Valley neighbors abstain from teas and occasional gatherings in the Northford mansion, even although the New Yorker treated them with an obvious assumption of superiority.

Soon enough Judith began to be seen in Northford's wheezing car, smartly dressed in costumes brought from the city's mart, or mounted on one of her employ-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

er's fine horses in a swagger riding habit—a creature of poise, of dignity and of beauty, a transformed Cinderella who had found her Prince Charming.

And then the tragedy started.

From my own window I witnessed its beginning. I saw Northford and Judith charging down the little valley where the winding road leaps a brook and falls over into Hohokus township, five hundred yards or so from my own doorway. I saw the tall, massive form of Galeg Rukker suddenly emerge from the bushes and stand straight and stiff in their path. I saw the two horses stop, and I witnessed a pantomime of violent speaking between the men.

And of a sudden Northford jumped from his horse and stood squarely in front of the young hill-man, menacing and squat, like the heavy bull confronting the lithe tiger. I saw a blow. I saw the two men rush together. I saw Judith's horse plunge and turn and come tearing up the hillside toward my house. And then I saw the man Northford on the ground and Galeg standing over him.

I ran from my study. I could hear Judith's screams from over the ridge, and when her horse came tearing into my driveway she charged down upon me, reining her mount strongly and still screaming.

"He'll kill him, Doctor. Oh, don't let him—don't—don't!" she cried; and then she sank, overcome, on the gravel road.

I picked her up and seated her gently against a tree; then I ran forward over the ridge.

Galeg Rukker was walking slowly and thoughtfully toward me, his head down, his feet dragging.

"I saw it, Galeg," I said. "I can't blame you, my boy, but that is no way to do things."

"He'll be needing your help, Doc," said Galeg. "Where's Judy?"

"Back there," I said, pointing. "And she'll be needing your help, too, I imagine." Then I hurried on to where Northford lay sprawling.

Unconscious, he was, and cruelly beaten. He was a big man too—broad of shoulder and massive as a gorilla; but he was no match for the young giant of the hills. I think Galeg Rukker, at that time, was even more powerful than his huge father. I worked on the man, and he recovered, slowly, sitting up and wiping the blood from his face.

"I'm sorry for this, Northford," I told him. "I tried to warn you, you know."

His only answer was a growl and a glare; and as he stalked away, whistling for his horse which stood browsing nearby, I knew that there would be a se-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quel to this unfortunate incident.

Back in my driveway Galeg and Judith were talking, the boy standing awkwardly yet nobly, and the girl sitting up against the tree where I had left her. She was crying softly.

"Oh, Galeg," she was saying, "can't you see? Can't you understand? I wanted you to leave the Houvenkopf and educate yourself—to be somebody. I wanted you to *want* to. I tried to *show* you. . . . But you wouldn't see. I'd have waited for you—"

"You know I can't leave my father," said Galeg, simply and quietly. "He wouldn't understand."

"You could have helped him more if you had learned how to live—how to mix with people—how to make money to live on. Oh, can't you see? I can't live that life of the hills any longer. It's all changed now. And I can't—love you—that way—not that old way, Galeg. I'm going to marry Mr. Northford, Galeg."

I SAW the boy stiffen at that. I saw the color leave his face, and a pallor come over him.

"Judy," he said slowly and with great pain in his voice, "yo' can't do that to me. Yo' married me, Judy, an' yo' be my wife. We didn't get ourselves married in no church, but that don't make no diff'rence. You're my woman. If yo' want a church weddin', I'll get yo' one. Yo' don't love that city feller, Judy. It's clo's yo' loves, an' automobiles an' a big house. Don't yo' make no mistake, Judy. Yo' aint his kind o' people. Yo' belongs up on our mountain. If yo' plants a wood posy in a garden, yo' gets a dead flower. If yo' takes one of our wild dogs an' puts him in a city, yo' gets a dead dog. Them folks don't want yo', Judy. That man aint goin' for to keep yo'. Yo' aint never goin' to belong to nobody else but me. . . . Judy, don't yo' know that?"

I could see fear creep into her face—stark fear, fright of truth. She sagged. Her head fell forward into her arms, tears came.

And then, suddenly and with almost a single movement, Galeg Rukker caught the girl up in his arms and crushed her to him; and before I could fathom his gesture, he had sprung away, running with her in his arms—she crying and beating at him with her little fists—running to where her horse stood browsing, and threw her across the neat pad of an English saddle, flinging himself up behind her, and tearing across the fields toward the Houvenkopf with the girl dangling like a sack of grain.

TWO State troopers called at my house that afternoon and with them was Ambrose Larning

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Northford. Not the trained, educated troopers of today were these mounted soldier-policemen, but cynical hard adventurers in uniform.

"Speak up now, Doctor. Where's the woman?" they demanded.

I pointed to the mountain.

"Looks like there's a felony somewhere, and you'd better be careful how you're mixed up in this. We're taking that boy for assault. We've had just about enough of these hill-billies, anyhow."

Northford said nothing; but as they rode off, I saw trouble in his eye.

It takes about an hour, either on foot or on horseback, to climb the Houvenkopf. The only pass is steep, sharp, treacherous—impassable in bad weather. And it was just about an hour after this interview that I heard two shots ring out, far up the high forest. Deer-hunters? This was spring, and the deer were not in season. But I had no time for speculation, for there was another visitor at my gate.

It was the young missionary Burran Whatley.

"There's trouble, Doctor," he said, "and I've come to you because you are the only man who knows the hill people. That wild man Mawm Rukker came down to the cabin and took all my youngsters away. He told us to get out. He said—nearly as I can understand it—that if we didn't leave the Valley tonight, he'd burn our place. He was really frightful. I've never seen such a savage fellow in my life. I'm not exactly afraid of course—but there's Mrs. Whatley to consider. What in the world does it mean?"

I told him.

"And I think you'd better take Rukker's advice and go—for a while, at least. If this blows over, you can begin again."

The poor chap went away, troubled and shaking his head.

IT was quite late that evening when the two troopers came back to my house. They came afoot, and they were both in fairly bad shape—one shot through the shoulder and the other with his skull cracked from blows of a club.

"Those damned hill-billies!" they shouted at me. "They shot our horses on the rock crest of the mountain, and then winged at us. We pushed over the hill to fight them; but there was a gang of about thirty men with rifles. One of them took a pot-shot at me." This was the man with the gunshot wound talking. "And they beat hell out of my pal here. We'll get a posse together this very night and drive them right out of the country. Now you fix us up, and see damned well that you keep out of this. We know

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

your sympathies, Doc. One trick out of you, and you'll land in jail."

That was all very well, but I had no intention of letting the Valley farmers start a war with the Jackson Whites. There are some five thousand of these queer wild people, scattered through a dozen or more colonies, all over the Ramapos; and the raising of a posse would mean nothing less than war. Bloody war. Stupid, uesless war.

So that night I slipped away quietly and climbed up the mountain-side to talk with Mawm Rukker.

Have you ever climbed a rugged little mountain—even a little one, like the Houvenkopf—at deepest night, with the mossy rocks all slimy under your feet from the springtime drizzle? With crawling things scurrying around you? With the woods so dark and dense that you can't see your own hands? With the knowledge that a misstep in some places is certain death—your body rolling down a sheer stony ledge and dashing into the rocks of the swift-shallow Ramapo River underneath? Imagine that, and then imagine the added knowledge that any minute some marksman who has never missed in his life may take a pot-shot at you before asking who you are.

But I got up there, somehow. I got to the crest, where the little hovels of the Jacks seem clustering and nestling shoulder to shoulder, as though to keep warm. And I called out to Mawm Rukker, giving my name and trusting in God that some one didn't shoot me out of sheer excitement.

However, the great man's form loomed up against the light of a flaming torch at the sound of my voice, and he called out:

"Ifn yo' coom a frien', yoong Doc, step oot here und show. Bütten coom yo' ag'in' usn, yo' best goon back."

I stepped over the rocks into the strangest gathering of humans I have ever witnessed.

Picture them for yourself——picture a circle of some two hundred men and women—black or brown, half of them; cynical Indian faces; drawn, pinched, yellowing faces of degenerates; deformed skulls, deformed limbs, deformed bodies; shrunken little men and women; huge tall fellows of Italian cast, or mayhap Portuguese who were not rightly of the Jacks but had joined them, escaping from the laws of civilization. Picture them, in tatters, in trousers stolen from your own clothesline, and shirts roped about them in the middle like Russian blouses. Fat squaws, there were, with broad haunches and broad cheek-bones, the pure-blooded descendants of the Tus-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

caroras. Lean, hungry youths, there were, with that shifty, half-sodden look of the drunkard.

And there was a fine new rifle in the hand of each man and woman. However poor the Jacks may be, they can all, somehow, afford a rifle.

This was a council of war. This was trouble. This was a peril to our quiet Valley, a peril brought there by the Devil in the person of a fellow named Northford—and by the caprices of a foolish, too-quickly-educated girl.

AND then I saw Judith. She stood there, staring at me, by Galeg Rukker's side. Gone were her fine clothes, her swagger riding-habit. She stood there leaning on the boy's arm, full of fear, full of worry, full of puzzled resentment and terror at the bees'-nest that was buzzing around her.

I started talking.

"I have come to warn you," I said. "The State troopers are raising a posse. I'm not going to talk about right and wrong. I'm only going to tell you that if you fight with the law, you'll have a bloody war that will not stop until the militia—the soldiers with machine-guns and field cannon—have driven you all from the mountain. For God's sake, stop and think. Judith, do you see what you've done? You will be responsible for the death of all these people. The Valley people will set fire to the mountain. They'll burn your village. You've got to come back with me."

And on I went. I pointed to their tiny one-room hovels—built of logs and stolen boards. I pointed to their scrawny children, peeking frightened out of the paneless windows. I told them it was murder to carry this vengeance on. I pleaded and I begged them to release the girl and let her go back. And they listened, silently, drunkenly, most of them—and stupidly. There was muttering among them, and dissension and clamor. One burly, squat, wild-looking fellow with a graying beard that flowed like moss or lichens over his swarthy face, screamed at me insanely, flourishing his rifle; but the others quieted him; and Mawm, Rukker's booming voice silenced them all as he said these words:

"Whuch law is ut in yo' Valley, dot take away a man his woom-an?"

HOW could I answer? How could I spend precious minutes to teach these simple people the ways of civilization and to explain the paradoxes of what we are pleased to call "justice?"

I said only:

"Galeg took the girl by force, Mawm Rukker, and force cries

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

out for force in reply. Do you hold the girl here against her will? Will she stay by her man—your son—while the blood of all of you is spattered over the stones? Give the girl her choice, Mawm Rukker," I pleaded. "Let her stay—or come back with me if she will."

Fine old patriarch, that man; and there was a straightforward justice in him that needed no urging. He stood there against the flickering light, pondering, and I could see the battle of mind that was going on within him.

But he made no answer—not then. Instead it was the girl Judith who spoke, stepping away from Galeg into the center of the people.

"I'll go back," she said, and her voice was tortured and low. "Let me go back with the Doctor. I did this thing. I'll have no blood shed on my account."

"Judy!" Galeg Rukker strode out to her, lifting her high from the ground in his huge arms. "Judy—yo'll not leave me now. Yo' wouldn't do that!"

"Put me down, Galeg."

He did, slowly. Every eye was on them. Then Judith went on, a little tremulously, sadly, with great effort:

"I'll go back," she said. "I do not love Galeg. A woman has a right to choose her own man. Take—me—back, Doctor Borsden—quickly. . . . Hurry!"

Then she tottered toward me and sank slowly to the ground before I could catch her and hold her steady.

GALEG again started forward, but Mawm Rukker stopped him.

"No, Galeg; yo'll not tech dot wooman. Usn'll do better shoold she goo. Ifn a wooman not lof her man, den ut's no goot. Butten the yoong Doc can tell them, doon dere, dot the river marks oor coontry. We'll haf not o' dere schoolin', und ifn dey coom op on the mountain, ut's bullets dey'll git from ourn peoples."

That was all. I knew it. I knew that no more talk would serve. I led the girl out of the flaming ring of faces, and over the ledge of rock where the narrow path winds down the mountain; and soon enough we were lost in the black of forest night, with only the low murmur of voices above us to tell us that the Jackson Whites were still there, still watchful, still full of hate and hurt toward the outer, civilized world.

And Judith was crying, softly.

"Oh, God, what have I done, what have I done?" she was saying over and over. "They're my people. . . . I can't—I can't let anything happen to them—to Galeg."

And I knew then that it was Galeg Rukker and not that hard

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Northford man whom she loved. Was this sacrifice? Was this ambition? Was this some perverted obstinacy of a young girl whose head was turned? I didn't know then.

A shot rang out below us and to the right, and I heard a cry farther down the path. We hurried as best we could, scrambling over dangerous ledges, trusting to my instinct and to Judith's long knowledge of the hills. My hand-lantern was none too bright, but its rays could not fail to discover the prone, dark, heaving figure that clung to a bush and moaned in agony some twenty feet below us.

It was Burran Whatley, the missionary, shot through the chest, and bleeding terribly. Who could have done that? Why was he there? Had Mawm Rukker and his resentful people run amok, after all? Were we to be plunged into the bloodshed I had tried so hard to avoid?

I PICKED him up in my arms while Judith, frightened and weeping, opened his clothes and tried to stanch the flow of blood with a handkerchief. A kindly but ascetic face, had the Reverend Burran Whatley, and even with the print of suffering written plainly on it, there was warmth in him, humanity in him.

He was revived a little by our movement of his body.

"Don't tell the men—below," he faltered. "They're—coming. I tried—tried to warn—"

And then he fainted again. Or perhaps he died then; for he never regained consciousness after that.

"Don't tell the men," he had said; and I knew that this frail, ascetic man had had the courage to brave the hill folk, in spite of their threats to burn his school, and to warn them a posse was coming.

But the posse came. We had no time to hide the body of Whatley, for they crept up on us of a sudden, calling out and challenging us as they peered over a cleft of rock covering us with their rifles.

I gave my name. I heard Northford's hard voice saying:

"You see? He's playing right in with these hill-billies. Better arrest him now, and hold him."

"There's a hurt man here," I called out. "It's Whatley, the missionary. Some of you better help me down with him." And then I saw them move carefully up toward me.

There were only ten or so, for the farmers of the Valley were not likely to join such a posse in large numbers. Dislike the mountain people they did, but they had respect for those dead-shot rifles, and they wanted peace. Then the light of their lanterns fell on Judith, who had stood silent, still crying gently.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It was one of the troopers who spoke.

"Hell, here's yer girl, Mr. Northford!"

She did not move.

"Judith?" The man's voice rang out, sharp and commanding. "Judith, what's all this about? Did they hurt you, girl?"

She said nothing.

"Judith," he cried, coming up to her; but the rest of the scene was lost in the excitement over Whatley. I only saw Northford take her by the hand and try to draw her to him. She was stiff and diffident and silent and unyielding, but she let him lead her away a few paces down the steep path.

Then the fury broke.

"Whatley's dead — they've killed him! It's that devil Rukker. Come on, boys, let's get them!"

I tried hard, then. I tried hard to dissuade them, to show them the stupidity of perpetuating this fight, of starting a feud that would make the Ramapo River run red with blood. But it was no use. They laughed at me. They jeered at me. They called me "nigger-lover," and charged up the mountain, all but two who carried the body of the dead missionary mournfully back to his waiting widow.

And I stumbled slowly back to my farm, knowing that by the morrow there would be a living hell in the Valley.

Judith? I did not see her go. I did not see her led away by the triumphant Northford, but I knew secretly and tragically that her sacrifice had been in vain, that she loved Galeg Rukker, and not this suave city man and all his ill-gotten money.

HELL in our Valley!

All night long there were shots crackling in the forest of the Houvenkopf. Word of Whatley's death had spread like wildfire, and more of the farmers joined the posse, indignant that this good young man should have been, however mistakenly, a victim of this stupid blood-feud.

And in the morning, looking in terror from my window, I could see a fierce column of smoke at the top of the mountain where raging flames, lighted by blind rage, were devouring the green firs and the maples—burning the pathetic little cabins of the Jackson Whites, whose only real fault was that they had stood by one another, were loyal to each other, that they believed in the sacredness of a simple pledge of troth.

"We'll burn those devils out!" the troopers had said, and they felt themselves justified. . . .

A blood-feud in New Jersey within thirty miles of New York? Today you can follow a State route where the cement automobile trail has cut through the Houvenkopf, laying bare and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

naked a tiny cluster of one-story shacks, exposing the very souls of these forest people to the eyes of tourists, and you would never suspect what fearsome history has been lived there. You can see the brown, black, yellowish, or tainted white skins of the people who stare at you as you whirl through their little "city," peeking timidly out of their doors, and you would never guess the fierceness that once was theirs. But turn back the pages of history, read the old newsprint of those early days of this century, and you find yourself plunged into an era of warfare, bloodshed, race-hatred and blind, stupid savagery which rivals anything you have learned of the mountain feuds of Tennessee.

Law and justice—strange, ambiguous words are those. They admit of a thousand interpretations. They vary with the soil and with the climate and with the state of people's souls. What is justice in Timbuctoo may be a crime in Hoboken; and if those two remote points were somehow to be thrown together, who should mete out justice which would be just for both?

There had been a murder. The death—unwarranted and inexplicable—of Burran Whatley could not, under our civilized laws, go unpunished. But there had been a wanton destruction of the homes of the Jackson Whites, nor could that blind, rage-built crime pass without vengeance under the code of those simple people. And thus the feud began. The Houvenkopf is not the only settlement of the Jacks in the Ramapos. Thousands of those people are scattered in small, hidden clusters throughout the mountains, and when "our" settlement was driven by fire from the Houvenkopf, they took shelter with their cousins, clamoring for vengeance.

Clannish were our farmers, and that brought cruelty. Cruel it was that the whole settlement of the Jacks should have been devoured by the flames of anger, that the crest of our magnificent mountain should have been consumed in the fire of intolerance. What a perverted thing justice can be! And when the smoldering ruins of those straight firs and lace-like maples were mere cold ashes,—as though the mountain had doffed its cap and revealed only a bald, tired, aged skull, as though Death had worn a toupee, —the farmers of our Valley drew a breath of greater ease, as if at last some menace had been driven away, as if that pyre had been a symbol of a new safety for them.

But this ease was not to last.

Not long after that tragedy, the rumor of Northford's impending marriage to Judith filtered through the Valley.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well," hissed Mrs. Farmwife, "it's about time *something* was done. Imagine a thing like that going on under our very noses! But I can't understand how he could actually *marry* her."

Bustle was apparent at the Northford estate. Servants were busy. Windows were shut in with heavy blinds, as though the very soul of the great house might escape during its owner's absence; storm-doors were erected, barns and stables locked, those fine horses shipped away to a more southerly climate.

And lastly, one day, the great, noisy automobile of Ambrose Northford was seen to leave his wooded driveway, roaring down the hill road toward the turnpike's junction, the goggled figure of Northford himself at the wheel and beside him, the duster-clad form of a woman whose face was concealed under an immense motoring-veil and by a "picture hat" such as was worn in those days. It could only have been Judith.

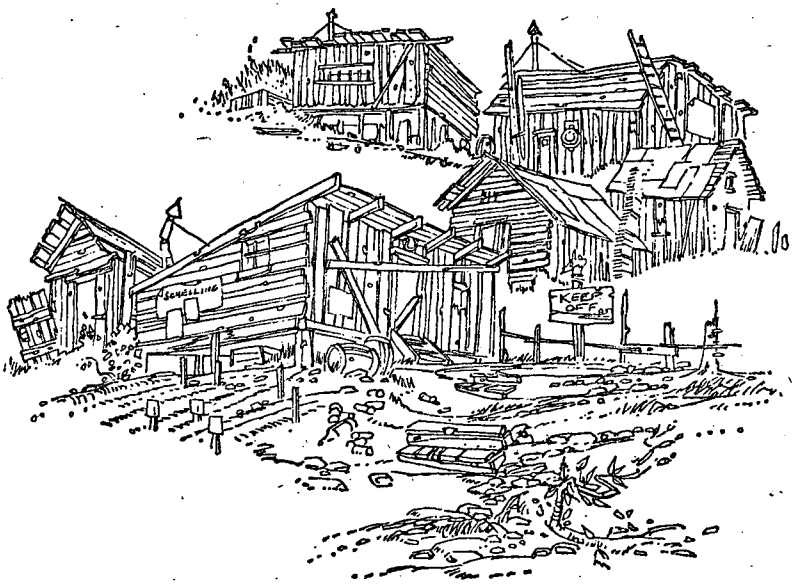
OUR hill road of hard-packed earth passes through a heavily wooded acre or two before it plunges down into the lower Valley where begins the broad State highway. A small boy engaged in shooting at sparrows or squirrels in this wood saw the car pass, and ran after them a bit, since an automobile was still something of a phenomenon in those days. As the car rounded the last turn, the boy heard the crack of a rifle, a scream, a crash. Running faster, he saw the car laboring in the ditch, its rear wheels whirring and tossing a futile stream of dirt, its driver slumped over the wheel. He saw also a tall, bushy, red-headed man bending over the tonneau and lifting the inert form of the woman from the car.

And the boy, frightened in the face of death, saw the man carry his limp burden into the trees and there disappear. Then he ran breathlessly and reported what he had seen to his father, who in turn telephoned the incredible news to the Sheriff in Suffern.

Who had fired that shot? Who had killed Ambrose Northford, found drilled cleanly through the head, still gripping the wheel of his car? Imagination and fancy gave the answer: Mawm Rukker. Popular legend, born of suspicion and not a little senseless fear, gave the answer: Mawm Rukker. And so, in every local barber-shop, in every post office and country store where men congregate, there appeared a printed placard: WANTED FOR MURDER: *Mawm Rukker of the Houvenkopf Jackson-White settlement.*

The Sheriff, aided by the State troopers, organized another pos-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



se, numbering more than fifty men, to march or ride through the entire region and to hunt down the alleged murderer, Mawm Rukker—wherever he might be found. This simple old man—to me so harmless and so loyal—was singled out as a symbol of menace. Both murders, that of Whatley and of Northford, were charged against him, despite the fact that it was patently impossible that he could have committed the first, and that the excited testimony of a small boy merely *suggested* him in the second case.

The little army of vigilantes crossed over the Taurn, over the Houvenkopf, over the lowly mountains of the region, bursting into squalid settlements where frightened women and round-eyed children cringed in their evil-smelling huts and babbled nothingness in answer to the questions—threatening questions—which were hurled at them. But they found no men. It seemed as though all the male members of the Jackson race had suddenly vanished, evaporated into thin air. Armed to the teeth with shotguns and rifles, the farmers had expected pitched battle, but not a shot greeted them in any one of the villages. And Mawm Rukker? He had not been seen. The women were dumb, speechless, incoherent.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A pack of bloodhounds, procured from a considerable distance, was set upon the trail. The pack outdistanced the men, vanished in full cry up the side of the Wanaque watershed, and disappeared. Those dogs never returned. No trace of them was ever found again.

ON the third day of the search a party of vigilantes swept through the Bear Pond Swamp, crossing the Ramapo River, intending to beat through the near-jungle of the highest range, leading with them, on leashes, another pack of bloodhounds. There is a sharp dip in the land, lower even than the swampy pond, but dry enough for careful foot-travel, just before the sheer steep of the mountain rises up to meet county line. And when the party reached this valley-within-a-valley, Death suddenly swooped down upon them.

Not gunshots. Not a frenzied charge of the mountain people. A new, unsuspected, savage, horrible death closed in upon them like an avenging fury. Only two men, terribly torn and bleeding, were able to drag themselves through to Hilburn; and the story they told is almost unbelievable.

The first warning of danger came when the bloodhounds, fierce beasts themselves, began whimpering and shaking, and refused to go on. Dusk was closing down slowly, and visibility was not of the best, but there was no sign of any lurking trouble.

Then, with a howling snarl, the terrible wild dogs of the Ramapos swarmed over those men in a black wave of destruction!

The thing seems unbelievable today; and yet even now, when the Ramapos are enlaced by cement roads and peopled by new, bright settlements where houses are modern and sanitary, where police uniforms abound, where factories send their smoke to mingle with the age-old clouds—even in this day, the wild dogs sometimes appear in full packs, vicious, destructive, savage beyond credibility.

And these werewolves, these phantom hounds, gathered in a foraging pack, hurled themselves upon those men. It is reported that they numbered hundreds, charging down into that narrow ravine as though their pack-leader were a sagacious general who knew his military tactics. No chance for firearms; quarters were too close, and light was bad, and there was danger of shooting one another.

The survivors of this terrible slaughter report how the bristling monsters suddenly loomed out of cover, fangs bared, bloodied, their muzzles a-froth. Useless to club with shotguns. Use-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

less to flay at the beasts with branches, pelt them with stones, slash at them with hunting-knives. They came like the onslaught of multifold death, suddenly, like a wolf-pack tearing their prey as the wolf tears the roebuck. Lean and black and famished, they were, and fearless in their mad hunger. They overwhelmed the men with sheer numbers. They snarled like demons incarnate. A very hell opened up in that swampy valley as the terrible beasts slashed men down, tearing them, rending them, devouring them.

And then suddenly—as suddenly as they had appeared, they vanished.

A shrill whistle sounded up on the mountain-side, so goes the report, and the dog-pack paused in their bloody battle—paused, and then vanished into the gloom of the trees, leaving only the torn shreds of what had been that posse of vigilantes.

Whistle? A whistle is a human sound. What human agency could have given that signal? What man-being could have had empire and mastery over such savage brutes?

Two of the posse, escaping somehow from the fate of the others, were able to drag their painful ways back to the little settlement of Hilburn, there to tell the story, gasping in agony of their hurts. A man had been seen, they said. A fabulous man, a creature of legend, had stood silhouetted against the falling sun, high on a rocky ledge. It had been he who whistled. Tall, he was, and bushy, and armed with a rifle. He had stood there and whistled, fingers in his mouth, and the dogs had vanished.

And the legend gave birth to an answer: the man could only have been Mawm Rukker, the "wild man" of the hills.

MAWM RUKKER! Mawm Rukker—"Keeper of the Beasts," they called him. "Wild man of the mountains," they called him. "The dog-man," they called him—"Murderer, fiend, ghoul, vampire." Dig into that old volume of newspapers, now sere and yellow, which your fathers cherished so preciously, dig into it and browse through it, see the records of that story, see the trial and the conviction of Mawm Rukker, learn what prejudice and fertile imagination can do, what a curse it can bring upon the head of a man, innocent of all criminal intent, whose only crime is the protection of his home, loyalty to his son, obedience to the oldest of all laws, that of an eye for an eye.

FROM Trenton and from Albany came the authority to mobilize the State militia. A state

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of siege was declared on the mountains. The counties of Bergen and Rockland and Sussex and Passaic were to become camping-grounds for grim soldiery, armed with machine-guns and fine rifles. The iron hand of "civilization," once and for all, was to reach out and grasp these little people and bring them by force into the herd of law-abiding, rule-of-thumb citizens.

And the goal of all this mobilization, the aim of it, was the capture of an aging, tiring, uncomprehending man, old Mawm Rukker.

But it never came to pass.

One day two bony nags rode into the town of Suffern. Mounted on one of them was a woman—a mere girl, almost—dressed in the ragged, branch-torn clothing of the hill folk; and upon the other, carrying his long rifle across his back, his head bowed, his red bush hatless in the breeze, was Mawm Rukker. Crowds followed them in the street, but they saw them not. A murmur arose behind them:

"It's Rukker—it's that mountain devil! Lynch him—kill him—string him up!"

But no hand was laid upon them.

They rode to the office of the State troopers. There they climbed down from their nags and entered the door. They confronted a blue-uniformed captain at his desk, and the girl Judith made this statement:

"Mawm Rukker has come to give himself up. He is guilty of nothing. He committed no murders. He is doing this to save his people. Send your soldiers back, and let the hill people alone. Give this man a fair trial and set him free. We don't want any more bloodshed or any more death."

And the rumbling voice of Mawm Rukker boomed out:

"Yis, dot is right. Dere is too mooch; too many off mine peoples are dead. Too many off your peoples are dead. Yo' haf want me; now I coom."

"Keeper of the beasts," they called him," "—Devil-man—wild man of the mountains." Did it never occur to them that this man was also a father?

The trial was held in Hackensack, the government seat of Bergen County. The passage of time lends an atmosphere of implausibility to the facts of that fantastic assize, but the account visible in the Bergen County *Chronicle* for all time will reveal to what heights of hysteria public emotion could rise. And Mawm Rukker, that primitive, simple man who had surrendered himself only in order that his fellow-men might live, was condemned even before the judge was seated at the bench.

Thirty-two witnesses for the State; two witnesses for the de-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fense. Thirty-two men unknowingly perjured themselves to condemn to death a bewildered, ignorant, uncomprehending man. Two persons—the girl Judith and myself—tried vainly to move the hardened hearts of those twelve jurors to whom the name Jackson White meant only outcast, only savagery.

LET me give you a picture of Mawm Rukker, standing in the prisoner's dock. Let me paint for you a creature of the wilds, confined, restive, dazed, towering over the mere men of that crowded room and its morbidly curious, like some primitive god. Let me show you a shouting, bullying prosecutor, howling phrases and sentences at the bushy Nimrod, shaking an accusing finger, smirking, insinuating, ranting and acting a pantomime of which Mawm Rukker understood not a single word or gesture.

"Now, my man," said the prosecutor, as reported by the *Chronicle*, "you admit coming down to the mission school of the late Burran Whatley and driving away the young children whom he was instructing in Christianity and other learning, and telling him to leave the Valley or you would burn his cabin. In other words, you admit threatening him? Come, speak up—answer yes or no."

"Yis, ut's true dot I haf coom down—"

"There, Your Honor, the man admits the threat. Now let us examine—"

Then again, that insufferable prosecutor would shout at Rukker:

"So you admit the possession of a rifle—specifically a .30-30 of the type known as a 'pump-action repeater,' whose bullet would make just such a wound as was found in the body of the late Ambrose Larning Northford? You admit it, don't you? You brought such a rifle with you when you came down to Suffern. You admit owning it, don't you? Answer me, Rukker."

And the bewildered old man replied, falteringly:

"Dot is a goot gun. Butten I haf no steal ut. I haf pay for ut mineself. Whyen you haf tooken my gun?"

And still again:

"You say you did not cause the dogs to attack the Sheriff's posse? But you admit that you sometimes feed those wild creatures. You admit that you have often shot a deer or other game—illicitly and out of season, too—and left the carcass for the wild dogs. In other words, you were friendly with the dogs, were you not? They knew you and they would obey you?"

"De dogs? Yis, I haf feed dem many times."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"So they follow you through the hills, eh?"

"Sometime maybe dey coom near me, yis, but—"

"You admit that, do you? And how do you call them when you have killed a deer?"

"Maybe I haf not understood dey coom—"

"So they come when you whistle, eh? And yet you claim you did not set the dogs on those men! Was it you who whistled for them to come away?"

"Yis, I coom doon whan I haf hear troppel doon dere, an' when I see dem dogs fight by dose men, I whistle."

"That's right! You whistled, and the dogs came away up to you. But how do you explain the fact that the dogs were there—the whole pack together—when the posse was looking for you? Just how can you explain that? Tell us, Rukker. The Court wants to know."

"Maybe I haf not understood so goot, Mistah. De dogs, dey roon always togedder lak' dat coom springtime. Maybe dey want for to kill sheeps, maybe cows, I don' know. Whan I see dem kill de mens, I try stop dem. I whistle; dey coom—dat's all I know."

"A likely story, Your Honor. Perhaps we have here not a murderer but a hero. I shall not presume to interpret this remarkable coincidence, however. I shall leave it to the keen discretion of the jury."

Rukker, the murderer!

I CAN see a pale, wan little girl in the witness-box, holding out her hands, pleading, spilling tears, pouring out a heart full of regret, of fear, of tragic hope. I can hear her again saying those words:

"Can't you see, Your Honor? If there is any fault, it is mine. I do not know who it was who killed Mr. Whatley, but it wasn't Mawm Rukker. . . . He was in his house, with his son and me, until I went back with the Doctor. Some of the men were posted as sentries. They would have shot at anyone. They were only trying to protect me. They believed I was married to Galeg—it's the way they do things in the hills. They believed Mr. Northford was taking me away—from my man, my husband. They couldn't understand. They thought the whole Valley wanted to take me away. It was my fault. I couldn't make them know. They couldn't understand how I could go off and marry Mr. Northford when I was already married to Galeg Rukker—their kind of marriage."

Then the prosecutor's suave voice brought shame to the girl. "Your Honor," he said, "I am forced to admire and to approve the plausible confession of guilt

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on the part of this young woman. Undoubtedly she is fundamentally to blame. But this is not the trial of a young woman who wanted luxury instead of a log cabin. This is the trial of a man for the charge of murder. This young woman—called, I believe, simply Judith and wanting another name—appears as a witness in behalf of the accused. One can but admire the staunchness of her—shall I say plea?—in behalf of the father of her—ah—lover. Yet it is the right—may I say the duty?—of the prosecution to discredit, if possible, any witness upon contingent grounds. I regret exceedingly this duty, but Your Honor, and gentlemen of the jury, I can not but perform my duty in exposing to you another face of this seemingly noble young woman—a face, may I say, less agreeable, less—ah—noble—"

I can remember the suspense, the cleverly created tension, in the pause that followed this remark. I can remember the astonished look in the eyes of Judith, the bewilderment of her, and the pitiful expression of hurt.

"The witness, Your Honor," he continued, "has admitted her presence in the automobile of the late Ambrose Northford at the time of his death. They were, she asserts, driving to New York, there to be united in holy wedlock."

HE paused again, and then lifting his voice, shaking his finger at the girl, he roared:

"But Ambrose Larning Northford was a married man!"

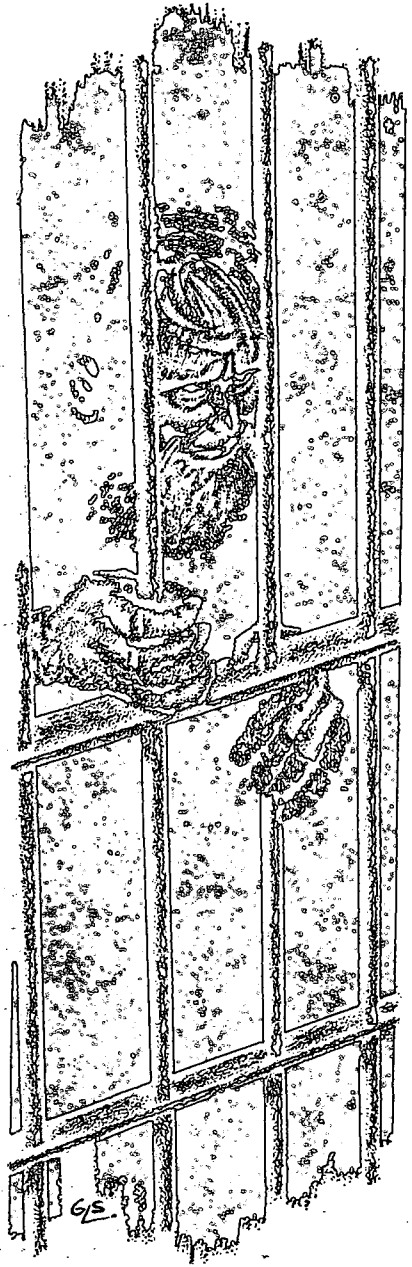
Shocked silence.

"I will produce certified copies of the records to prove that Mr. Northford had been married these ten years, and that his wife was and is not only alive, but that he was in constant correspondence with her. Therefore, gentlemen,—therefore, Your Honor,—it becomes apparent that the witness was not and could not have been undertaking a trip with the deceased which was to end in lawful matrimony.

"And that is not all. In the pockets of the deceased, when the body was found, were discovered passage tickets on the Allen Line steamer *Breresford,* destination, Liverpool; and one of those tickets was in the name of a certain Judith Northford—inscribed as sister of the deceased. . . . Sister, Your Honor—sister! Can we be so sure, can we be quite positive, that *all* of this estimable young woman's words, her seeming nobleness, her urgent pleas, are not moved by an impulse of that oldest of human vices—cupidity, covetousness? I rest my case, Your Honor."

Filthy, morbid, bitter insinuation! The court was in an uproar. Spectators cackled with laughter; they hissed and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



sneered. And as they sneered, Judith, the nameless, sprang blindly to her feet, muttering:

"I didn't know—I didn't know. . . . Oh, how could they? How could they? How could he—"

Then she fainted.

Three days for that trial. Three stupid, blind, farcical days of mock-justice. Myself, I was browbeaten and sneered at as a "nigger-lover" in that court. Clients whose lives and the lives of whose children I had saved were there, sneering and snarling. And on the third day the jury, charged by a confident judge, brought back the verdict: "Guilty!"

Mawm Rukker, guilty of murder.

Mawm Rukker, guilty of a wholesale slaughter.

Mawm Rukker, sentenced to death by hanging.

Mawm Rukker, a puzzled old man, not even understanding why it was that the morbid crowd cheered, not even comprehending clearly that he was accused, of what he was accused, hardly grasping why it was that he, coming down from his mountain fastness, was held in a tiny cell, badly fed and his hands fastened with unbreakable steel . . . Mawm Rukker, standing up and facing the judge, and saying gently in that vibrant woodland voice:

"Den I kin goo now? Ut is fin-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ish? Dere will be no more troppels?"

And the crowd sneering, sneering with ironical laughter!

But the moment came.

THERE was a scuffle in the rear of the courtroom. A door was flung open. A handful of guards were flung down sprawling on the floor. The gigantic figure of a man—bristling, unshaven, ruddy, his hair gleaming red, a scrubby beard on his face, his eyes wild and compelling broke through them and charged down the aisle.

"Stop!" his voice said. "Wait. I'm Galeg Rukker. I'm the man yo' want, not my father. Try me, not him. Talk to me, not to him damn yo'!"

Crash of the gavel.

Rush of more court guards.

Screams of a startled crowd.

And Galeg Rukker's voice bellowing:

"I killed Ambrose Northford. I killed him, yo' hear? I shot him, y' hear me? Let me talk, damn yo' all."

OH, they let him talk. Even the warped justice of prejudice could not refuse that.

You can read Galeg's single, simple, violent statement in the *Chronicle*. Perhaps your fathers will have saved it these years as I have, for nothing like it was ever spoken in any courtroom; nor has any trial ended as did that of Mawm Rukker.

Slow was the boy's speech; bookish was his English, and scarcely at all did he lapse into the strange bastard idiom of his hill race.

But there was blood in those slow, careful words, love in his words, hate and death and loyalty in his words; and they fanned the fierce fire of him, standing there in the courtroom, storming at a jury, at a judge, at a crowd of stunned people, pouring out the indignation of an entire race against a civilization that could, in its smug complacency, in its mistaken well-meaningness, betray him and his own people.

"Listen!" he said. And the commanding power of his words stirred strange emotions in that stuffy room "Listen, yo'! A man takes away my woman—my wife, she is . . . And I killed him. Yo' send people up to teach us learnin', an' they teach us how we're poor. They make my woman ashamed o' me, an' so she don't want me no more. My pop told him to go away . . . I mean that missionary feller. He didn't go, so I killed him, too. What makes you think it's my pop who done that? What makes you think it's my pop who set the dogs on you? D'yo' think a man kin set dogs like that on anybody? Yo' send a bunch of men

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

up in our hills right now, an' the dogs'll get 'em! Yo' call yourselfs educated, but I'm tellin' yo' you're jest ign'rant. I aint sorry none. I aint done nothin' 'cept what any man would 'a' done. Yo' let my pop go. He ain't done nothin'. It's me that done it. It's me, an' yo' aint goin' to tech me, neither!"

And then, before all that roomful of astounded people, that strange lad, half savage, half civilized, a hybrid—torn by vague consciousnesses of a morality which his race before him had forgotten, if ever known, slowly sank back on his bench—and wept.

There was no other sound in that court. Seconds passed in awed silence. Then, at a slight motion of the judge's hand, two court attendants started to move toward him. Mawm Rukker, strangling with emotion, stood to his feet, a hand stretched out toward his boy. But swifter than any other movement was that of the girl Judith. She was running across the hardwood floor toward the boy; she was crouching at his side; she was clasping his head in her soft hands. And she was whispering, hoarsely:

"Galeg—Galeg—it's a lie! . . . Tell them, it's a lie."

BUT the guard had reached him. Firmly, though with a certain gentleness, they lifted him to his feet. In a daze, he seemed, mindless of Judith's clinging hands, mindless of the people, of the jury upon whose twelve faces—so hard and unforgiving but a moment since—there was drops of moisture, mindless of the judge's stare. And still dazed and unresisting, he followed the two attendants out of the room, through the little door that leads to the narrow passage where prisoners pass. We heard the door close upon him. We heard Judith's sobbing. We heard Mawm Rukker's inarticulate groan.

And then—we heard the muffled roar of a shot. . . .

Frantically the two attendants tried to tell it; frantically and hysterically they tried.

"He's dead!" they cried in concert. "He's killed himself. He had a gun on him, and now he's dead."

And in the confused murmuring uproar which followed that tragic announcement, I could see the judge's lips shakily forming the syllables:

"Case—State against Mawm Rukker—dismissed. . . . Ruled—mistrial."

But it was a power greater, far, than that of any mere earthly judge, which had spoken; and the magistrate's unheard words were but a weak echo. . . .

A saint was born in that courthouse. Let no Devil's advocate

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

appear to challenge her sanctity; for if utter repentance, utter self-abnegation, utter self-sacrifice and humiliation, long service to humanity and infinite suffering can engender saintliness, that tragic instant in a worldly judge's court engendered Saint Judith.

For the crowd, the tragedy ended then. Blind souls, they saw nothing, for they had no eyes to see. What was it to those people—whose morbid curiosity had been sated, whose stupid arrogance had been stimulated, whose vanity had been whetted to witness the (to them) amusing drama of a man bereft, a son sacrificed, a woman humiliated. What was it to them, I say, that this graying old man so out of place among them, should stalk slowly from the courtroom, his straight figure bent over with sorrow, bowed, broken?

How could any of them translate the simpler tragedy—the girl, that same girl whose honor they had heard stripped from her, whose naked soul they had snickered at—the girl reaching her hand after the old man, reaching out, touching his arm, saying:

"Pop . . . Oh, Pop—take me with you. . . . Take Judy—"

They made way for her, through the pressing crowd. They stood aside for her. They lingered there, watching her, like hungry ghouls to feed upon dead spirits. They saw the old man shake her hand away and force his tired body onward. They saw her follow him, tears streaming down her face; they heard her cry out after him:

"Oh, Pop. . . . Oh, Pop, take me! I—I can't—"

And they heard the rumble of his voice when he turned; they heard it, and the fierce torture of the words as they burned his lips in the saying, and the smoldering embers in the heart of him sent an invisible odor of burning into the corridor, as Mawm Rukker said:

"Get yo' gone, wooman, dat yo' coom by no hurt from me. Yo' haf kilt mine Galeg!"

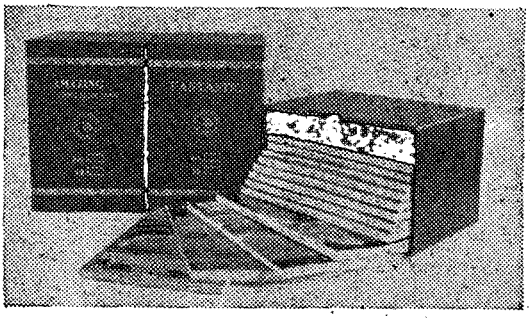
AYE, they saw and they heard, did that crowd; but it was only a play, only a thing done and said amongst them, to pass and forget, to mention, perhaps, over their coffee that night, saying:

"Well, it certainly served the little hussy right. A murderess, she is, as plain as daylight, too. *Imagine,* trying to make up to that old devil after—What an ugly business!"

An old man named Mawm Rukker strode through the streets of Hackensack, never stopping to wonder at the streetcars, fantastic things which he

(*Continued on page 126*)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



DO YOU SAVE YOUR COPIES OF STORIES OF IMAGINATION FANTASTIC?

Make sure they're kept neat and always handy for instant reference—with a handsome file that's designed to hold a full year's copies!

- **washable Kivar cover creates a leather-like appearance**
- **available in maroon backing with black sides or black with maroon**
- **24-carat solid gold leaf embossed lettering for magazine's name**
- **attractively priced at only $2.95 each, 3 for $8.00, 6 for $15.00**
- **files are shipped to you prepaid and are fully guaranteed**

NOTE: these special-quantity prices apply for any combination of titles, so you can have them for all your favorite magazines.

Order several today—for all the Ziff-Davis magazines: Popular Photography, Modern Bride, HiFi/Stereo Review, Electronics World, Popular Electronics, Flying, Car and Driver, Popular Boating, Amazing, and Fantastic, and for your other favorite publications, as well. (Ziff-Davis magazines available in colors of your choice as noted in coupon. Other publications will be shipped in standard colors available.)

Jesse Jones Box Corp., Dept. F, Box 5120
Philadelphia 41, Pa.

Please send me: (Fill in title, quantity and check appropriate column for color desired)

MAGAZINE TITLE	QUANTITY	BLACK BACKING/ MAROON SIDES	MAROON BACKING/ BLACK SIDES
Fantastic			

$2.95 each, 3 for $8.00 or 6 for $15.00 — shipped prepaid — fully guaranteed

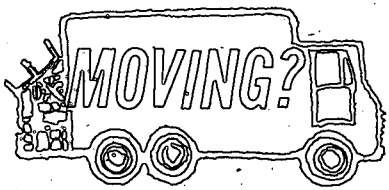
Total amount enclosed _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **Zone** ____ **State** _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



If you've recently changed your address, or plan to in the near future, be sure to notify us at once. We'll make the necessary changes on your mailing plate, and see to it that your subscription continues without interruption. Right now—print the information requested in the spaces below and mail it to: FANTASTIC, 434 So. Wabash Ave., Chicago 5, Illinois.

Name *Please PRINT!*

**Account No.*

Old Address

City *State*

New Address

City *Zone* *State*

Mail copies to new address starting with ..... issue.

***(Your Account Number appears directly above your name on the mailing label.)**

(*Continued from page 124*)

had never seen before; never stopping to see the crowd that pointed at him, never hearing the hushed murmurs:

"There he goes! . . . Mawm Rukker. . . . Keeper of the beasts—wild man of the mountain. . . . It's a wonder they let him go, at that!"

Through the streets he went, but solitary and bowed down, striding fast to free his feet of the very dust of civilization, striking off through the fringe of woods to the north, and disappearing in the trees whose branches let down and caressed him, for he was their own.

But it was a saint that he left behind him.

I found Judith—a little gray figure, she was, crouched against the banister of the great staircase in the court building, white-faced, a tear falling as though it were dew from her soul oozing out of her. She yielded to my arm, and together we went to my buggy, driving back to the Valley through the brisk air and the green fields

"There's nothing I can say, Judith," I told her, "except that there's a home for you here in my lonely house—if you want it. You'll find work to do there, and it will help you."

She shook her head.

"Thank you, Doctor," she said. "But I can't stay there. I can't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stay in the Valley. And I've plenty of work to do. My place is on the mountain—with my people. Mawm Rukker will need me now."

Then she trudged away, up the steep path that led to where the mountain's crest had been burned away, and I did not know then that this was a holy woman.

A SAD history, those next twenty years, but there was beauty in it, and a great lesson. I cannot write it here. I cannot write the vast volume that history would make. My story is done. My book is closed. That record is written in a greater Book than mine.

But out of that deep tragedy was born sunshine and goodness. It is true that the Jackson White settlement was rebuilt on the mountain. It is true that Mawm Rukker, an old man already led his people back to the Houvenkopf, like Joshua leading Israel, and that the axes and knives of them cut new branches to build new cabins for their homes. And it is true that the girl Judith crept humbly into his cabin, silent, mouselike, alone.

They tell the story today in the Ramapos. They tell how Mawm Rukker would not speak, had never spoken to her. They tell how, with silent devotion, she cooked his food and split his

(*continued on page 130*)

PART TIME INCOME!

Sell Advertising Matchbooks to Businesses in Your Area!

Fast, easy "order from the catalog" selling, with big cash commissions and steady repeat orders. Free sales kit shows you where and how to get orders. Part or full time. No experience needed. No investment, no risk. Every business a prospect! Write today for details!

MATCH CORPORATION OF AMERICA

Dept. EL-44, 3433-43 W. 48th Place, Chicago 32, Ill.

Back Issues Available

Use this coupon to order back issues of FANTASTIC

We have a limited supply of back issues that can be ordered on a first-come, first-served basis. Just fill in the coupon below, enclose your remittance in the amount of 65¢ for each issue and mail.

ZIFF-DAVIS SERVICE DIVISION
Dept. BCF, 589 Broadway
New York 12, New York

Please send the following back issues of FANTASTIC

I am enclosing _____ to cover cost of the magazine, shipping and handling.

Month _____ Year _____

Month _____ Year _____

Month _____ Year _____

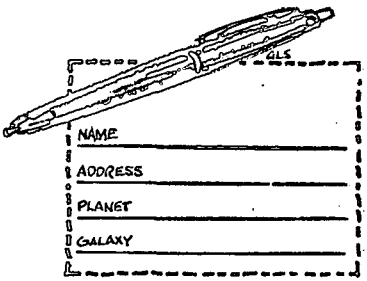
Address _____

Name _____

City _____ Zone ____ State ____

No charge or C.O.D. orders please.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



CLASSIFIED market place

RATES AND TERMS: 25¢ per word (including name and address). Minimum order $2.50. Payment must accompany copy except when ads are placed by accredited advertising agencies. Frequency discount: 5% for 6 months; 10% for 12 months paid in advance.

GENERAL INFORMATION: First word in all ads set in bold caps at no extra charge. Additional words may be set in bold caps at 5¢ extra per word. All copy subject to publisher's approval. **Closing Date:** 1st of the 3rd preceding month (for example, April issue closes January 1st). Send order and remittance to: Martin Lincoln, FANTASTIC, One Park Avenue, New York 10016

AUTHORS

AUTHORS! Learn how to have your book published, promoted, distributed. Free booklet "ZD", Vantage, 120 West 31 St., New York 1.

BINOCULARS AND TELESCOPES

SCIENCE Bargains—Request Free Giant catalog "CJ"—148 pages—Astronomical Telescopes, Microscopes, Lenses, Binoculars, Kits, Parts, War surplus bargains. Edmund Scientific Co., Barrington, New Jersey.

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES

READ America's Amateur Magazines. 8 for $1.00. Seth A. Johnson, 330 Stiles St., Vaux Hall, N.J.

BACK issues, Scientifantasy magazines, books. Free catalog. Gerry de la Ree, 277 Howland, River Edge, N.J.

NAME the book!—we'll find it for you! Out-of-print book specialists. All subjects. (Title alone is sufficient.) Write—no obligation. Books-On-File, Dept. AMF, Union City, New Jersey.

SPECIALIST: Science-Fiction, Fantasy, Weird Fiction. Books, pocketbooks. Lists issued. Stephen's Book Service, 63 Third Avenue, New York 3, N.Y.

SEVEN Mortal Loves of John Sincere. The Abc's of Love's Exchange! Just published by Poets-Corner Press. Unique creation! Price $2.00 (refundable). Details and free "Lone Hour Books" Index. Cecilia Ferrante, Box 444, Fort Lee, New Jersey.

WHY Buy Books? Send 10¢ For information-Science Fiction Circulating Library, P.O. Box 1308, South San Gabriel, Calif.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

INVESTIGATE Accidents—Earn $750 to $1,000 monthly. Men urgently needed. Car furnished. Business expenses paid. No selling. No college education necessary. Pick own job location. Investigate full time. Or earn $6.44 hour spare time. Write for Free Literature. No obligation. Universal, CZ-4, 6801 Hillcrest, Dallas 5, Texas.

PLASTICS—cash in now with my new Home Producers "No-Selling" Plan. I supply everything—even Financing! NPC. Box 23321-G ZZ. Los Angeles 23, Cal.

I MADE $40,000.00 Year by Mailorder! Helped others make money! Start with $10.00—Free Proof. Torrey, Box 3566-N Oklahoma City 6, Oklahoma.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

LEARN While Asleep, hypnotize with your recorder, phonograph. Astonishing details, sensational catalog free! Sleep-Learning Association, Box 24-ZD, Olympia, Washington.

LEARN While Asleep. Remarkable. Scientific. 92% Effective. Details Free. ASR Foundation, Box 7021, Dept. e.g. Lexington, Kentucky.

HELP WANTED

EARN Extra money selling advertising book matches. Free sample furnished. Matchcorp. Dept. MD-44, Chicago 32, Illinois.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

FOREIGN Employment. Construction, other work projects. Good paying overseas jobs with extras, travel expenses. Write only: Foreign Service Bureau, Dept. D, Bradenton Beach, Fla.

EMPLOYMENT Resumes. Earn more by presenting yourself to prospective employers more effectively. Send only $2.00 (cash or money order) for complete Resume Writing Instructions, including sample and instructions for letter of transmittal. J. Ross, 63-61 Yellowstone Blvd., Forest Hills 75, New York, Dept. 6J-FA.

FOR SALE

LEG IRONS $7.95; Handcuffs, $7.95. Leather Restraints; Fetters; Collector's Specialties; Catalog 50¢. Thomas Ferrick Box 12F, Newburyport, Mass.

MEN'S New Swiss Wrist Watches. Engraved back, antimagnetic, unbreakable crystal, two year guarantee certificate. $3.65 C.O.D. . . . New King James version Bibles; size 5½ x 7¾"; black, hard cover binding, $1.70 C.O.D.; Flexible, black artificial leather binding, $2.05 C.O.D. Satisfaction guaranteed or prompt refund. Braidwood Company, Box 2100-F, Fort Dearborn Post Office, Dearborn, Michigan.

WEIRD Rubber Bat with luminous fangs, 75¢. List free. Ralph Cole, Manistee, Michigan.

GOVERNMENT SURPLUS

FREE War Surplus Catalog when you order our Directory! Jeeps $188, Airplanes $159, Boats $7.88, Generators $2.68; typical government sale prices when buying 10,001 surplus items wholesale direct. Full details, 587 locations, procedure $1.00. Surplus, Box 177 C1, York, Pa.

TAPE AND RECORDERS

TAPE Recorders. HI-FI Components, Sleep-Learning Equipment, Tapes, Unusual Values. Free Catalog. Dressner Dept. 15, 1523-FA Jericho Tpke, New Hyde Park 15, N.Y.

INVENTIONS WANTED

INVENTIONS promoted, protected. All types; design, chemical, mechanical. For free forms and information write New York Invention Service, 141 Broadway, Room 817P, New York 6, N.Y.

HYPNOTISM

COMPLETELY Control your mind and body or others! Now you can hypnotize anyone, anytime, anyplace—undetected—or money back in three days. Powerful oriental secrets, never before revealed, make you a master of even somnambulism! In everyday English. This devastating book will be banned. Hurry send $3.98 now! Insta-Trance, P.O. Box 5092, Eugene, Oreg.

MISCELLANEOUS

TRANSISTORIZED Products importers catalog, $1.00. Intercontinental, CPO Box 1717, Tokyo, Japan.

STRANGE Unique Items Catalog 10¢. Black Magic Shop, Dept. E, Box 5664, Minneapolis, Minn., 55417.

100,000 Live Animals! Fantastic new kit provides a miniature aquarium of selected species of tropical protozoans for low-power microscopes. Just add water! Grows in hours in a paper cup—lasts weeks. Complete with food, instructions and decelerator for slow motion study. $1.00 micro-Zoo, Dep't F, Box 334, South Miami, Florida.

SHAMELESS Lady — Tossing Coin. Good Luck Piece, "Heads," "Tails," Wow! A riot, 50¢ ppd. Wayno, Box 182-D, Addison, Michigan.

POWERFUL self-improvement techniques available! Send 10¢ for illustrated brochure. Emersel Company, Dept. B, Box 125, Lincoln 1, Nebraska.

MOVIES

MEDICAL Film—Adults only. "Childbirth", one reel 8mm, $7.50; 16mm, $14.95. International T, Greenvale, L.I., New York.

PATENTS

INVENTIONS; Ideas developed for Cash Royalty sales. Raymond Lee, 2104G Bush Building, New York City, 36.

PERSONALS

INDEPENDENT Thinkers—investigate Humanism, the scientific personal philosophy! Free literature. American Humanist Association, Dept. B2, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

WILD Labels, bumper strips! Strange, startling, unconventional! Krazy Labels, Box 15-H Olympia, Washington.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MUSIC

POEMS wanted for songs and records. Send poems. Crown Music, 49-RB West 32, New York 1.

WANTED TO BUY

QUICKSILVER, Platinum, Silver, Gold. Ores analyzed. Free Circular. Mercury Terminal, Norwood, Massachusetts.

THE DEVIL CAME TO OUR VALLEY

(Continued from page 127)

wood and made his place clean and nursed the man through a long sad life, but never a word was spoken between them, and that was for twenty years.

A saint, was Judith; and she gave of herself, in simple penitence. A little clapboard schoolhouse was built on the mountain's edge, and there Judith brought the Jackson children daily, to listen to her soft voice. There she taught them the simple things she had learned in the mission school—things which, too quickly absorbed, had betrayed her: taught them with love and with understanding.

I COULD fill that volume with the story of civilization's march into the mountain, the building of its roads, the blooming of a golf-club where once the Northford mansion stood. I could tell you of the vast concrete knife, a new State highway, that slashed through the very heart of the Houvenkopf settlement, hewing a clean strip of gray past the doors of those mountain huts, all to the bewilderment of the little hill people, stripping them bare of their privacy, robbing them of their hiding-places, churning them, willy-nilly, into the maelstrom of a world which closed in around them.

All this and more I could write; but my book is ended. Myself, I have grown old—sick and old with waiting, with watching, with hoping. Who shall love a saint? Who shall love a holy woman? It is true, indeed that no word of love was ever spoken between us, Judith and me; yet we both knew we were waiting.

And now it is over. . . .

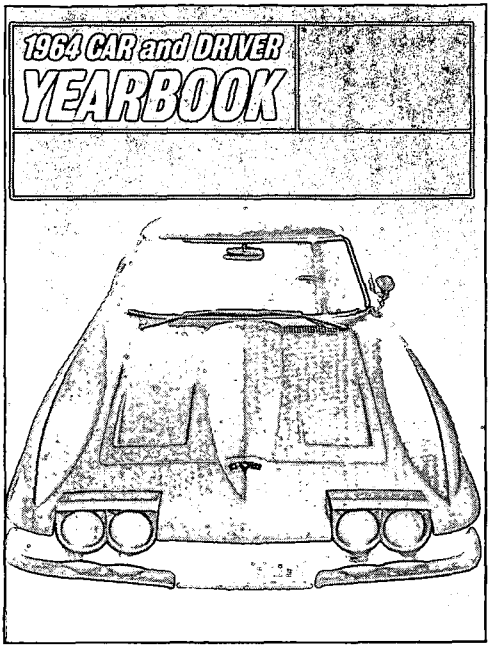
Last night the wild dogs of the Houvenkopf set up their howling, and I knew that old Mawm Rukker was dead, had passed on and was united with Galeg, his son. The penance is over. Judith will be coming down from the mountain now, released from her vow. An old woman, she will be; but the soul of her will be a girl's soul.

Listen! Perhaps that is she even now—at my door. . . . At the door of my house, so long empty, so long hungry, waiting, waiting.

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HERE IN ONE PUBLICATION



ARE ROAD TESTS ON TWENTY '64 CARS . . . COMPARATIVE DATA ON FIFTY-TWO OTHER MODELS . . . A BEAUTIFUL SALON OF GREAT MOTOR RACING PHOTOGRAPHS . . . A RUNDOWN ON AVAILABLE ACCESSORIES . . . A COMPARISON-IN-DEPTH OF FORD AND CHEVROLET . . . NEWS OF TECHNICAL ADVANCES AND INNOVATIONS . . .

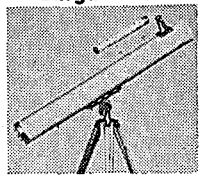
ALL IN THE 1964 CAR AND DRIVER YEARBOOK —NOW ON SALE AT YOUR FAVORITE NEWSSTAND FOR ONLY ONE DOLLAR.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GET READY FOR THE SPACE and SCIENCE ERA! SEE SATELLITES, MOON ROCKETS CLOSE-UP

AMAZING SCIENCE BUYS for FUN, STUDY or PROFIT

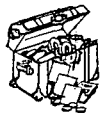
Bargain! 3" Astronomical Telescope



See the stars, moon, phases of Venus, planets close up! 60 to 180 power—famous Mt. Palomer Reflecting type. Unusual Buy! Equipped with Equatorial mount; finder telescope; hardwood tripod. Included FREE: "STAR CHART"; 272-page "HANDBOOK OF HEAVENS"; "HOW TO USE YOUR TELESCOPE" book.
Stock No. 85,050-HK $29.95 pstpd.

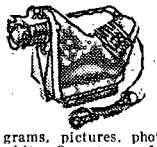
4¼" Reflecting Telescope—up to 255 Power, all-metal pedestal mount.
Stock No. 85,105-HK $79.50 F.O.B. Barrington, N. J.

SCIENCE TREASURE CHESTS
For Boys—Girls—Adults!



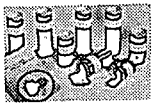
Science Treasure Chest—Extra-powerful magnets polarizing filters, compass, one-way-mirror film prism, diffraction grating, and lots of other items for hundreds of thrilling experiments, plus a Ten Lens Kit for making telescopes, microscopes, etc. Full Instructions.
Stock No. 70,342-HK .....$5.00 Postpaid
Science Treasure Chest DeLuxe
Stock No. 70,343-HK .....$10.00 Postpaid

TERRIFIC BUY! AMERICAN MADE!
OPAQUE PROJECTOR



Projects illustrations up to 3" x 3½" and enlarges them to 35" x 30" if screen is 6½ ft. from projector; larger pictures if screen is further away. No film or negatives needed. Projects charts, diagrams, pictures, photos, lettering in full color or black-and-white. Operates on 115 volt, A.C. current 6-ft. extension cord and plug included. Operates on 60 watt bulb not included. Size 12" x 8" x 4½" wide. Weight 1 lb. 2 oz. Plastic case with built-in handle.
Stock No. 70,199-HK .....$7.95 Postpaid

CRYSTAL GROWING KIT



Do a crystalography project illustrated with large beautiful crystals you grow yourself. Kit includes the book, "Crystals and Crystal Growing" and generous supply of the chemicals you need to grow large display crystals of potassium aluminum sulfate (clear), potassium chromium sulfate (purple), potassium sodium tartrate (clear), nickel sulfate hexahydrate (blue green) of heptahydrate (green), potassium ferricyanide (red), and copper acetate (blue green).
Stock No. 70,336-HK .....$9.50 Postpaid

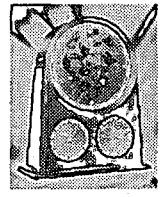
LIFE SIZE VISIBLE HUMAN HEAD
Precise, Full Color, Take-apart Model

Study the most complex organ easily, inexpensively. Ideal for student, hobbyist, professional. *You will be amazed at the detail. Molded from* actual human skull. Eyes, ears and teeth easily removed and disassembled for complete study. Entire brain spinal cord and organs of mouth and throat presented in vivid detail. *Amazingly low priced—conforms to rigid laboratory standards. 16-page* fully illustrated medical handbook included.
Stock No. 70,447-HK .....$9.95 Postpaid

OTHER VISIBLE TAKE-APART MODELS
Stock No. 70,228-HK Man .....$4.98 Postpaid
Stock No. 70,283-HK Woman .....$4.98 Postpaid

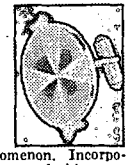
SCALE MODELS
Stock No. 70,294-HK Skull .....$4.95 Postpaid
Stock No. 90,022-HK Skeleton .....$5.00 Postpaid

AUTOMATICALLY SHOWS TIME, TIDES, POSITION OF SUN, MOON, STARS
NEW SPILHAUS SPACE CLOCK
19 DIFFERENT READINGS AT A GLANCE



Startling scientific achievement, yet completely practical and functional. Designed for the space age by world renowned scientist, Dr. Athelstan Spilhaus, Dean of Technology, University of Minnesota. Handsome conversation piece—*constantly* up-to-date encyclopedia of the sky. The Spilhaus Space clock has beautiful fruitwood case and 3 sky-blue dials. Blends with decor of any home, office, club room, classroom, museum, display window, hotel, etc. Large *dial shows sun position*, daily sun rise and set, moon position, moon rise and set, phase of moon, low and high tide time, current stage of tide, day and month of year, current position of stars in sky, time of star rise and star set, relationships of sun, moon and stars, *sidereal or star time. Left dial shows local time.* Right dial shows world time including major U.S. cities and Universal (Greenwich) time. Operates on house current—requires only one simple setting for any geographic location. Measures 16" high x 11½" wide x 4½" deep. Presentation plaques available. *Complete satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded.*
STOCK NO. 1201-HK .....$150.00 Plus Fed. Excise Tax

DAZZLING DIFFRACTION JEWELRY FOR MEN AND WOMEN NOW AVAILABLE IN GOLD



This science-inspired jewelry glows with the twinkling magic of rainbows. It uses circular patterns of 1" DIFFRACTION GRATING REPLICA to break up light into all the rich, deep colors of nature's grandest phenomenon. Incorporated into beautiful jewelry, these exquisite new fashion accessories are now available by lustrous gold as well as silver. Other items available. Write for complete list.

ITEM	GOLD	SILVER	PRICE Postpaid
EARRINGS	No. 1814-HK	No. 1704-HK	$2.20
CUFF LINKS	1827-HK	1714-HK	2.20
PENDANT	1818-HK	1729-HK	2.20
¾" TIE CLASP & CUFF LINK SET	1831-HK	1743-HK	3.85
BRACELET (Six ¾" gratings)	1816-HK	1735-HK	7.70

6 x 30 WAR SURPLUS AMERICAN-MADE BINOCULARS

Big savings—brand new. Crystal clear viewing—6 power. Optics fully coated. Individual focus. Exit pupil 5mm. Approx. field—445 ft. at 1000 yds. Excellent for spectator sports, races, hunting, etc. Normally costs $100 up. Complete with carrying case and strap.
Stock No. 963-HK .....$33.00 Postpaid
7 x 35 AMERICAN MADE BINOCULARS
Stock No. 964-HK .....$60.50 Ppd. (tax included)
7 x 50 BINOCULARS—Terrific Buy!
Stock No. 1544-HK .....$74.80 Pstpd. (tax incl.)

WRITE FOR FREE GIANT CATALOG

Completely new, enlarged edition. New items, categories, illustrations. 148 easy-to-read pages packed with over 1000 items. Enormous selection of Astronomical Telescopes, Microscopes, Binoculars, Magnifiers, Lenses, Prisms, parts, accessories, math learning aids, do-it-yourself kits, exciting exclusives. Write for free Catalog, "HK".

ORDER BY STOCK NUMBER • OPEN ACCT. TO RATED FIRMS • SATISFACTION GUARANTEED!

EDMUND SCIENTIFIC CO., BARRINGTON, NEW JERSEY 08007

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED